WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?



Frontispiece

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BY

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AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL"

IN TWO VOLUMES

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LORD LYTTON'S NOVELS.

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EUGENE ARAM
NIGHT AND MORNING.
PELHAM
ERNEST MALTRAVERS.
ALICE
THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII
THE CAXTONS
DEVEREUX
THE DISOWNED.
GODOLPHIN.
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A STRANGE STORY
THE LAST OF THE BARONS
LEILA, AND THE PILGRIMS ON THE RHINE.
LUCRETIA
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MY NOVEL. Vol
RIENZI
WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT? Vol 1
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ZANONI
THE COMING RACE
KENELM CHILLINGLY
THE PARISIANS Vol 1
THE PARISIANS Vol
FALKLAND AND ZICCI
PAUSANIAS THE SPARTAN

WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

Vignettes for the next Book of Beauty.

"I QUITE agree with you, Alban; Honoria Vipont is a very superior young lady."

"I knew you would think so!" cried the Colonel, with more warmth than usual to him.

"Many years since," resumed Darrell, with reflective air, "I read Miss Edgeworth's novels; and in conversing with Miss Honoria Vipont, methinks I confer with one of Miss Edgeworth's heroines—so rational, so prudent, so well-behaved—so free from silly romantic notions—so replete with solid information, moral philosophy and natural history—so sure to regulate her watch and her heart to the precise moment, for the one to strike, and the other to throb—and to marry at last a respectable steady husband, whom she will win with dignity, and would lose with—decorum! A very superior girl indeed." *

"Though your description of Miss Vipont is satirical," said Alban Morley, smiling, in spite of some irritation, "yet I will accept it as panegyric; for it conveys, unintentionally, a just idea of the qualities that make an intelligent companion and a safe wife. And those are the qualities we must look to, if we marry at our age. We are no longer boys," added the Colonel, sententiously.

* Darrell speaks—not the author. Darrell is unjust to the more exquisite female characters of a Novelist, admirable for strength of sense, correctness of delineation, terseness of narrative, and lucidity of style—nor less admirable for the unexaggerated nobleness of sentiment by which some of her heroines are notably distinguished.

Darrell.—"Alas, no! I wish we were. But the truth of your remark is indisputable. Ah, look! Is not that a face which might make an octogenarian forget that he is not a boy?—what regular features!—and what a blush!"

The friends were riding in the park; and as Darrell spoke, he bowed to a young lady, who, with one or two others, passed rapidly by in a barouche. It was that very handsome young lady to whom Lionel had seen him listening so attentively in the great crowd, for which Carr Vipont's family party had been deserted.

"Yes; Lady Adela is one of the loveliest girls in London," said the Colonel, who had also lifted his hat as the barouche whirled by—"and amiable too: I have known her ever since she was born. Her father and I are great friends—an excellent man, but stingy. I had much difficulty in arranging the eldest girl's marriage with Lord Bolton, and am a trustee in the settlements. If you feel a preference for Lady Adela, though I don't think she would suit you so well as Miss Vipont, I will answer for her father's encouragement and her consent. 'Tis no drawback to you, though it is to most of her admirers, when I add, 'There's nothing with her!'"

"And nothing in her! which is worse," said Darrell. "Still, it is pleasant to gaze on a beautiful landscape, even though the soil be barren."

Colonel Morley.—"That depends upon whether you are merely the artistic spectator of the landscape, or the disappointed proprietor of the soil."

"Admirable!" said Darrell; "you have disposed of Lady Adela. So ho! so ho!" Darrell's horse (his old high-mettled horse, freshly sent to him from Fawley, and in spite of the five years that had added to its age, of spirit made friskier by long repose) here put down its ears—lashed out—and indulged in a bound which would have unseated many a London rider. A young Amazon, followed hard by some two or three young gentlemen and their grooms, shot by, swift and reckless as a hero at Balaclava. But with equal suddenness, as she caught sight of Darrell—whose hand and voice had already soothed the excited nerves of his steed—the Amazon wheeled round and gained his side. Throwing up her veil, she revealed a face so prettily arch—so perversely gay—with eye of radiant hazel, and fair locks half loosened

from their formal braid—that it would have beguiled resentment from the most insensible—reconciled to danger the most timid. And yet there was really a grace of humility in the apologies she tendered for her discourtesy and thoughtlessness. As the girl reined her light palfrey by Darrell's side—turning from the young companions who had now joined her, their hackneys in a foam—and devoting to his ear all her lively overflow of happy spirits, not untempered by a certain deference, but still apparently free from dissimulation—Darrell's grand face lighted up—his mellow laugh, unrestrained, though low, echoed her sportive tones;—her youth, her joyousness were irresistibly contagious. Alban Morley watched observant, while interchanging talk with her attendant comrades, young men of high *ton*, but who belonged to that *jeunesse dorée* with which the surface of life patrician is fretted over—young men with few ideas, fewer duties—but with plenty of leisure—plenty of health—plenty of money in their pockets—plenty of debts to their tradesmen—daring at Melton—scheming at Tattersall's—pride to maiden aunts—plague to thrifty fathers—fickle lovers, but solid matches—in brief, fast livers, who get through their youth betimes, and who, for the most part, are middle-aged before they are thirty—tamed by wedlock—sobered by the responsibilities that come with the cares of property and the dignities of rank—undergo abrupt metamorphosis into chairmen of quarter sessions—county members, or decorous peers—their ideas enriched as their duties grow—their opinions, once loose as willows to the wind, stiffening into the palisades of fenced propriety—valuable, busy men, changed as Henry V., when, coming into the cares of state, he said to the Chief Justice, "There is my hand;" and to Sir John Falstaff,

"I know thee not, old man;
Fall to thy prayers!"

But, meanwhile the *élite* of this *jeunesse dorée* glittered round Flora Vyvyan: not a regular beauty like Lady Adela—not a fine girl like Miss Vipont, but such a light, faultless figure—such a pretty, radiant face—more womanly for affecting to be man-like—Hebe aping Thalestris. Flora, too, was an heiress—an only child—spoilt, wilful—not at all accomplished—(my belief is that accomplishments are

thought great bores by the *jeunesse dorée*)—no accomplishment except horsemanship, with a slight knack at billiards, and the capacity to take three whiffs from a Spanish *cigarette*. That last was adorable—four offers had been advanced to her hand on that merit alone.—(N.B. Young ladies do themselves no good with the *jeunesse dorée*, which, in our time, is a lover that rather smokes than "sighs, like furnace," by advertising their horror of cigars.) You would suppose that Flora Vyvyan must be coarse—vulgar perhaps; not at all; she was *piquante*—original; and did the oddest things with the air and look of the highest breeding. Fairies cannot be vulgar, no matter what they do; they may take the strangest liberties—pinch the maids—turn the house topsy-turvy; but they are ever the darlings of grace and poetry. Flora Vyvyan was a fairy. Not peculiarly intellectual herself, she had a veneration for intellect; those fast young men were the last persons likely to fascinate that fast young lady. Women are so perverse; they always prefer the very people you would least suspect—the antithesis to themselves. Yet is it possible that Flora Vyvyan can have carried her crotchets to so extravagant a degree as to have designed the conquest of Guy Darrell—ten years older than her own father? She, too, an heiress—certainly not mercenary; she who had already refused better worldly matches than Darrell himself was—young men, handsome men, with coronets on the margin of their note-paper and the panels of their broughams! The idea seemed preposterous; nevertheless, Alban Morley, a shrewd observer, conceived that idea, and trembled for his friend.

At last the young lady and her satellites shot off, and the Colonel said cautiously, "Miss Vyvyan is—alarming."

DARRELL.—"Alarming! the epithet requires construing."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"The sort of girl who might make a man of our years really and literally—an old fool!"

DARRELL.—"Old fool such a man must be if girls of any sort are permitted to make him a greater fool than he was before. But I think that, with those pretty hands resting on one's arm-chair, or that sunny face shining into one's study windows, one might be a very happy old fool—and that is the most one can expect!"

COLONEL MORLEY (checking an anxious groan).—"I am afraid, my poor friend, you are far gone already. No

wonder Honoria Vipont fails to be appreciated. But Lady Selina has a maxim—the truth of which my experience attests—'the moment it comes to women, the most sensible men are the'—"

"Oldest fools!" put in Darrell. "If Mark Antony made such a goose of himself for that painted harridan Cleopatra, what would he have done for a blooming Juliet! Youth and high spirits! Alas! why are these to be unsuitable companions for us, as we reach that climax in time and sorrow—when to the one we are grown the most indulgent, and of the other have the most need? Alban, that girl, if her heart were really won—her wild nature wisely mastered—gently guided—would make a true, prudent, loving, admirable wife—"

"Heavens!" cried Alban Morley.

"To such a husband," pursued Darrell, unheeding the ejaculation, "as—Lionel Haughton. What say you?"

"Lionel—oh, I have no objection at all to that; but he's too young yet to think of marriage—a mere boy. Besides, if you yourself marry, Lionel could scarcely aspire to a girl of Miss Vyvyan's birth and fortune."

"Ho, not aspire! That boy at least shall not have to woo in vain from the want of fortune. The day I marry—if ever that day come—I settle on Lionel Haughton and his heirs five thousand a-year; and if, with gentle blood, youth, good looks, and a heart of gold, that fortune does not allow him to aspire to any girl whose hand he covets, I can double it, and still be rich enough to buy a superior companion in Honoria Vipont—"

MORLEY.—"Don't say buy—"

DARRELL.—"Ay, and still be young enough to catch a butterfly in Lady Adela—still be bold enough to chain a panther in Flora Vyvyan. Let the world know—your world in each nook of its gaudy auction-mart—that Lionel Haughton is no pauper-cousin—no penniless fortune-hunter. I wish that world to be kind to him while he is yet young, and can enjoy it. Ah, Morley, Pleasure, like Punishment, hobbles after us, *pede claudo*. What would have delighted us yesterday does not catch us up till to-morrow, and yesterday's pleasure is not the morrow's. A pennyworth of sugar-plums would have made our eyes sparkle when we were scrawling pot-hooks at a preparatory school, but no one gave us sugar-plums then. Now every day at

dessert France heaps before us her daintiest sugar-plums in gilt *bonbonnières*. Do you ever covet them? I never do. Let Lionel have his sugar-plums in time. And as we talk, there he comes. Lionel, how are you?"

"I resign you to Lionel's charge now," said the Colonel, glancing at his watch. "I have an engagement—troublesome. Two silly friends of mine have been quarrelling—high words—in an age when duels are out of the question. I have promised to meet another man, and draw up the form for a mutual apology. High words are so stupid nowadays. No option but to swallow them up again if they were as high as steeples. Adieu for the present. We meet to-night at Lady Dulcett's concert?"

"Yes," said Darrell. "I promised Miss Vyvyan to be there, and keep her from disturbing the congregation. You, Lionel, will come with me."

LIONEL (embarrassed).—"No; you must excuse me. I have long been engaged elsewhere."

"That's a pity," said the Colonel, gravely. "Lady Dulcett's concert is just one of the places where a young man should—be seen." Colonel Morley waved his hand with his usual languid elegance, and his hack cantered off with him, stately as a charger, easy as a rocking-horse.

"Unalterable man," said Darrell, as his eye followed the horseman's receding figure. "Through all the mutations on Time's dusty high-road—stable as a milestone. Just what Alban Morley was as a school-boy he is now; and if mortal span were extended to the age of the patriarchs, just what Alban Morley is now, Alban Morley would be a thousand years hence. I don't mean externally, of course; wrinkles will come—checks will fade. But these are trifles: man's body is a garment, as Socrates said before me, and every seven years, according to the physiologists, man has a new suit, fibre and cuticle, from top to toe. The interior being that wears the clothes is the same in Alban Morley. Has he loved, hated, rejoiced, suffered? Where is the sign? Not one. At school, as in life, doing nothing, but decidedly somebody—respected by small boys, petted by big boys—an authority with all. Never getting honours—arm and arm with those who did; never in scrapes—advising those who were; imperturbable, immovable, calm above mortal cares as an Epicurean deity. What can wealth give that he has not got? In the houses of the

richest he chooses his room. Talk of ambition, talk of power—he has their rewards without an effort. True prime-minister of all the realm he cares for; good society has not a vote against him—he transacts its affairs, he knows its secrets—he wields its patronage. Ever requested to do a favour—no man great enough to do him one. Incorruptible, yet versed to a fraction in each man's price; impeccable, yet confidant in each man's foibles; smooth as silk, hard as adamant; impossible to wound, vex, annoy him—but not insensible; thoroughly kind. Dear, dear Alban! nature never polished a finer gentleman out of a solider block of man!" Darrell's voice quivered a little as he completed in earnest affection the sketch begun in playful irony, and then, with a sudden change of thought, he resumed lightly,—

"But I wish you to do me a favour, Lionel. Aid me to repair a fault in good breeding, of which Alban Morley would never have been guilty. I have been several days in London, and not yet called on your mother. Will you accompany me now to her house and present me?"

"Thank you, thank you; you will make her so proud and happy; but may I ride on and prepare her for your visit?"

"Certainly; her address is—"

"Gloucester Place, No. —."

"I will meet you there in half an hour."

CHAPTER II.

"Let Observation, with expansive view,
Survey mankind from China to Peru,"

—and Observation will everywhere find, indispensable to the happiness of woman, A VISITING ACQUAINTANCE.

LIONEL knew that Mrs. Haughton would that day need more than usual forewarning of a visit from Mr. Darrell. For the evening of that day Mrs. Haughton proposed "to give a party." When Mrs. Haughton gave a party, it was a serious affair. A notable and bustling housewife, she attended herself to each preparatory detail. It was to assist at this party that Lionel had resigned Lady Dulcett's concert. The young man, reluctantly acquiescing in the arrangements by which Alban Morley had engaged him a

lodging of his own, seldom or never let a day pass without gratifying his mother's proud heart by an hour or two spent in Gloucester Place, often to the forfeiture of a pleasant ride, or other tempting excursion, with gay comrades. Difficult in London life, and at the full of its season, to devote an hour or two to visits, apart from the track chalked out by one's very mode of existence—difficult to cut off an hour so as not to cut up a day. And Mrs. Haughton was exacting—nice in her choice as to the exact slice in the day. She took the prime of the joint. She liked her neighbours to see the handsome, elegant young man dismount from his charger or descend from his cabriolet, just at the witching hour when Gloucester Place was fullest. Did he go to a levee, he must be sure to come to her before he changed his dress, that she and Gloucester Place might admire him in uniform. Was he going to dine at some very great house, he must take her in his way (though no street could be more out of his way), that she might be enabled to say in the parties to which she herself repaired—"There is a great dinner at Lord So-and-so's to-day; my son called on me before he went there. If he had been disengaged, I should have asked permission to bring him here."

Not that Mrs. Haughton honestly designed, or even wished to draw the young man from the dazzling vortex of high life into her own little currents of dissipation. She was much too proud of Lionel to think that her friends were grand enough for him to honour *their* houses by his presence. She had in this, too, a lively recollection of her lost Captain's doctrinal views of the great world's creed. The Captain had flourished in the time when Impertinence, installed by Brummell, though her influence was waning, still schooled her oligarchs, and maintained the etiquette of her court; and even when his *mésalliance* and his debts had cast him out of his native sphere, he lost not all the original brightness of an exclusive. In moments of connubial confidence, when owning his past errors, and tracing to his sympathising Jessie the causes of his decline, he would say, "'Tis not a man's birth, nor his fortune, that gives him his place in society—it depends on his conduct, Jessie. He must not be seen bowing to snobs, nor should his enemies track him to the haunts of vulgarians. I date my fall in life to dining with a horrid man who lent me

£100, and lived in Upper Baker Street. His wife took my arm from a place they called a drawing-room (the Captain as he spoke was on a fourth floor), to share some unknown food which they called a dinner (the Captain at that moment would have welcomed a rasher). The woman went about blabbing—the thing got wind—for the first time my character received a soil. What is a man without character! and character once sullied, Jessie, a man becomes reckless. Teach my boy to beware of the first false step—no association with *parvenus*. Don't cry, Jessie—I don't mean that he is to cut *you*—relations are quite different from other people—nothing so low as cutting relations. I continued, for instance, to visit Guy Darrell, though he lived at the back of Holborn, and I actually saw him once in brown beaver gloves. But he was a relation. I have even dined at his house, and met odd people there—people who lived also at the back of Holborn. But he did not ask me to go to *their* houses, and if he had, I must have cut him."

By reminiscences of this kind of talk, Lionel was saved from any design of Mrs. Haughton's to attract his orbit into the circle within which she herself moved. He must come to the parties she gave—illumine or awe odd people *there*. That was a proper tribute to maternal pride. But had they asked him to their parties, she would have been the first to resent such a liberty.

Lionel found Mrs. Haughton in great bustle. A gardener's cart was before the street door. Men were bringing in a grove of evergreens, intended to border the staircase, and make its exiguous ascent still more difficult. The refreshments were already laid out in the dining-room. Mrs. Haughton, with scissors in hand, was cutting flowers to fill the *épergne*, but darting to and fro, like a dragon-fly, from the dining-room to the hall, from the flowers to the evergreens.

"Dear me, Lionel, is that you? Just tell me, you who go to all those grandees, whether the ratafia-cakes should be opposite to the sponge-cakes, or whether they would not go better—thus—at cross-corners?"

"My dear mother, I never observed—I don't know. But make haste—take off that apron—have these doors shut—come up-stairs. Mr. Darrell will be here very shortly. I have ridden on to prepare you."

"Mr. Darrell—TO-DAY!—How could you let him come? O Lionel, how thoughtless you are! You should have some respect for your mother—I *am* your mother, sir."

"Yes, my own dear mother—don't scold—I could not help it. He is so engaged, so sought after; if I had put him off to-day, he might never have come, and—"

"Never have come! Who is Mr. Darrell, to give himself such airs?—Only a lawyer after all," said Mrs. Haughton, with majesty.

"Oh mother, that speech is not like you. He is our benefactor—our—"

"Don't, don't say more—I was very wrong—quite wicked—only my temper, Lionel dear. Good Mr. Darrell! I shall be so happy to see him—see him, too, in this house that I owe to him—see him by your side! I think I shall fall down on my knees to him."

And her eyes began to stream.

Lionel kissed the tears away fondly. "That's my own mother now indeed—now I am proud of you, mother; and how well you look! I am proud of that too."

"Look well—I am not fit to be seen, this figure—though perhaps an elderly quiet gentleman like good Mr. Darrell does not notice ladies much. John, John, make haste with those plants. Gracious me! you've got your coat off!—put it on—I expect a gentleman—I'm at home, in the front drawing-room—no—that's all set out—the back drawing-room, John. Send Susan to me. Lionel, do just look at the supper-table; and what is to be done with the flowers, and—"

The rest of Mrs. Haughton's voice, owing to the rapidity of her ascent, which affected the distinctness of her utterance, was lost in air. She vanished at culminating point—within her chamber.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Haughton at home to Guy Darrell.

THANKS to Lionel's activity, the hall was disencumbered—the plants hastily stowed away—the parlour closed on the festive preparations—and the footman in his livery waiting at the door—when Mr. Darrell arrived. Lionel

himself came out and welcomed his benefactor's footstep across the threshold of the home which the generous man had provided for the widow.

If Lionel had some secret misgivings as to the result of this interview, they were soon and most happily dispelled. For, at the sight of Guy Darrell leaning so affectionately on her son's arm, Mrs. Haughton mechanically gave herself up to the impulse of her own warm, grateful, true woman's heart. And her bound forward, her seizure of Darrell's hand—her first fervent blessing—her after words, simple but eloquent with feeling—made that heart so transparent, that Darrell looked it through with respectful eyes.

Mrs. Haughton was still a pretty woman, and with much of that delicacy of form and outline which constitutes the gentility of person. She had a sweet voice too, except when angry. Her defects of education, of temper, or of conventional polish, were not discernible in the overflow of natural emotion. Darrell had come resolved to be pleased if possible. Pleased he was, much more than he had expected. He even inly accepted for the deceased Captain excuses which he had never before admitted to himself. The linen-draper's daughter was no coarse presuming dowdy, and in her candid rush of gratitude there was not that underbred servility which Darrell had thought perceptible in her epistolary compositions. There was elegance too, void both of gaudy ostentation and penurious thrift, in the furniture and arrangements of the room. The income he gave to her was not spent with slatternly waste or on tawdry gewgaws. To ladies in general, Darrell's manner was extremely attractive—not the less winning because of a certain gentle shyness which, implying respect for those he addressed, and a modest undervaluing of his own merit, conveyed compliment and soothed self-love. And to that lady in especial such gentle shyness was the happiest good-breeding.

In short, all went off without a hitch, till, as Darrell was taking leave, Mrs. Haughton was reminded by some evil genius of her evening party, and her very gratitude, longing for some opportunity to requite obligation, prompted her to invite the kind man to whom the facility of giving parties was justly due. She had never realised to herself, despite all that Lionel could say,

the idea of Darrell's station in the world—a lawyer who had spent his youth at the back of Holborn, whom the stylish Captain had deemed it a condescension not to cut, might indeed become very rich; but he could never be the fashion. "Poor man," she thought, "he must be very lonely. He is not, like Lionel, a young dancing man. A quiet little party, with people of his own early rank and habits, would be more in his way than those grand places to which Lionel goes. I can but ask him—I ought to ask him. What would he say if I did not ask him? Black ingratitude indeed, if he were not asked!" All these ideas rushed through her mind in a breath, and as she clasped Darrell's extended hand in both her own, she said, "I have a little party to-night!"—and paused. Darrell remaining mute, and Lionel not suspecting what was to ensue, she continued: "There may be some good music—young friends of mine—sing charmingly—Italian!"

Darrell bowed. Lionel began to shudder.

"And if I might presume to think it would amuse you, Mr. Darrell, oh, I should be so happy to see you!—so happy!"

"Would you?" said Darrell, briefly. "Then I should be a churl if I did not come. Lionel will escort me. Of course you expect him too?"

"Yes, indeed. Though *he* has so many fine places to go to—and it can't be exactly what he is used to—yet he is such a dear good boy that he gives up all to gratify his mother."

Lionel, in agonies, turned an unfilial back, and looked steadily out of the window; but Darrell, far too august to take offence where none was meant, only smiled at the implied reference to Lionel's superior demand in the fashionable world, and replied, without even a touch of his accustomed irony,—"And to gratify his mother is a pleasure I thank you for inviting me to share with him."

More and more at her ease, and charmed with having obeyed her hospitable impulse, Mrs. Haughton, following Darrell to the landing-place, added—

"And if you like to play a quiet rubber—"

"I never touch cards—I abhor the very name of them, ma'am," interrupted Darrell, somewhat less gracious in his tones.

He mounted his horse; and Lionel, breaking from Mrs. Haughton, who was assuring him that Mr. Darrell was not

at all what she expected, but really quite the gentleman—nay, a much grander gentleman than even Colonel Morley—regained his kinsman's side, looking abashed and discomfited. Darrell, with the kindness which his fine quick intellect enable him so felicitously to apply, hastened to relieve the young guardman's mind.

"I like your mother much—very much," said he, in his most melodious accents. "Good boy! I see now why you gave up Lady Dulcott. Go and take a canter by yourself, or with younger friends, and be sure that you call on me so that we may be both at Mrs. Haughton's by ten o'clock. I can go later to the concert if I feel inclined."

He waved his hand, wheeled his horse, and trotted off toward the fair suburban lanes that still proffer to the denizens of London glimpses of rural fields, and shadows from quiet hedgerows. He wished to be alone; the sight of Mrs. Haughton had revived recollections of bygone days—memory linking memory in painful chain—gay talk with his younger schoolfellow—that wild Charlie, now in his grave—his own laborious youth, resolute aspirings, secret sorrows—and the strong man felt the want of that solitary self-commune, without which self-conquest is unattainable.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Haughton at home miscellaneously. Little parties are useful in bringing people together. One never knows whom one may meet.

Great kingdoms grow out of small beginnings. Mrs. Haughton's social circle was described from a humble centre. On coming into possession of her easy income and her house in Gloucester Place, she was naturally seized with the desire of an appropriate "visiting acquaintance." The accomplishment of that desire had been deferred awhile by the excitement of Lionel's departure for Paris, and the immense temptation to which the attentions of the spurious Mr. Courtenay Smith had exposed her widowed solitude: but no sooner had she recovered from the shame and anger with which she had discarded that showy impostor, happily in time, than the desire became the more keen; because the good lady felt that with a mind so active and restless as hers, a visiting acquaintance might

be her best preservative from that sense of loneliness which disposes widows to lend the incautious ear to adventurous wooers. After her experience of her own weakness in listening to a sharper, and with a shudder at her escape, Mrs. Haughton made a firm resolve never to give her beloved son a father-in-law. No, she would distract her thoughts—she would have a VISITING ACQUAINTANCE. She commenced by singling out such families as at various times had been her genteelest lodgers—now lodging elsewhere. She informed them by polite notes of her accession of consequence and fortune, which she was sure they would be happy to hear; and these notes, left with the card of "Mrs. Haughton, Gloucester Place," necessarily produced respondent notes and corresponding cards. Gloucester Place then prepared itself for a party. The *ci-devant* lodgers urbanely attended the summons. In their turn they gave parties. Mrs. Haughton was invited. From each such party she bore back a new draught into her "social circle." Thus, long before the end of five years, Mrs. Haughton had attained her object. She had a "VISITING ACQUAINTANCE!" It is true that she was not particular; so that there was a new somebody at whose house a card could be left, or a morning call achieved—who could help to fill her rooms, or whose rooms she could contribute to fill in turn. She was contented. She was no tuft-hunter. She did not care for titles. She had no visions of a column in the *Morning Post*. She wanted, kind lady, only a vent for the exuberance of her social instincts; and being proud, she rather liked acquaintances who looked up to, instead of looking down on her. Thus Gloucester Place was invaded by tribes not congenial to its natural civilised atmosphere. Hengists and Horsas, from remote Anglo-Saxon districts, crossed the intervening channel, and insulted the British nationality of that salubrious district. To most of such immigrators, Mrs. Haughton, of Gloucester Place, was a personage of the highest distinction. A few others of prouder status in the world, though they owned to themselves that there was a sad mixture at Mrs. Haughton's house, still, once seduced there, came again—being persons who, however independent in fortune, or gentle by blood, had but a small "visiting acquaintance" in town; fresh from economical colonisation on the Continent, or from distant provinces in these three kingdoms. Mrs. Haughton's rooms were well

lighted. There was music for some, whist for others; tea, ices, cakes, and a crowd for all.

At ten o'clock—the rooms already nearly filled, and Mrs. Haughton, as she stood at the door, anticipating with joy that happy hour when the staircase would become inaccessible—the head attendant, sent with the ices from the neighbouring confectioner, announced in a loud voice, "Mr. Haughton—Mr. Darrell."

At that latter name a sensation thrilled the assembly—the name so much in every one's mouth at that period, nor least in the mouths of the great middle class, on whom—though the polite may call them "a sad mixture," cabinets depend—could not fail to be familiar to the ears of Mrs. Haughton's "visiting acquaintance." The interval between his announcement and his ascent from the hall to the drawing-room was busily filled up by murmured questions to the smiling hostess,—"Darrell! what! *the* Darrell! Guy Darrell! greatest man of the day! A connection of yours? Bless me, you don't say so?" Mrs. Haughton began to feel nervous. Was Lionel right? Could the man who had only been a lawyer at the back of Holborn really be, now, such a very, very great man—greatest man of the day? Nonsense!

"Ma'am," said one pale, puff-cheeked, flat-nosed gentleman, in a very large white waistcoat, who was waiting by her side till a vacancy in one of the two whist-tables should occur. "Ma'am, I'm an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Darrell. You say he is a connection of yours? Present me to him."

Mrs. Haughton nodded flutteringly, for, as the gentleman closed his request, and tapped a large gold snuff-box, Darrell stood before her—Lionel close at his side, looking positively sheepish. The great man said a few civil words, and was gliding into the room to make way for the press behind him, when he of the white waistcoat, touching Mrs. Haughton's arm, and staring Darrell full in the face, said, very loud: "In these anxious times, public men dispense with ceremony. I crave an introduction to Mr. Darrell." Thus pressed, poor Mrs. Haughton, without looking up, muttered out, "Mr. Adolphus Poole—Mr. Darrell," and turned to welcome fresh comers.

"Mr. Darrell," said Mr. Poole, bowing to the ground, "this *is* an honour."

Darrell gave the speaker one glance of his keen eye, and thought to himself,—"If I were still at the bar I should be sorry to hold a brief for that fellow." However, he returned the bow formally, and, bowing again at the close of a highly complimentary address with which Mr. Poole followed up his opening sentence, expressed himself "much flattered," and thought he had escaped; but wherever he went through the crowd, Mr. Poole contrived to follow him, and claim his notice by remarks on the affairs of the day—the weather—the funds—the crops. At length Darrell perceived, sitting aloof in a corner, an excellent man whom indeed it surprised him to see in a London drawing-room, but who, many years ago, when Darrell was canvassing the enlightened constituency of Ouzelford, had been on a visit to the chairman of his committee—an influential trader—and having connections in the town—and, being a very high character, had done him good service in the canvass. Darrell rarely forgot a face, and never a service. At any time he would have been glad to see the worthy man once more, but at that time he was grateful indeed.

"Excuse me," he said bluntly to Mr. Poole, "but I see an old friend." He moved on, and thick as the crowd had become, it made way with respect as to royalty, for the distinguished orator. The buzz of admiration as he passed—louder than in drawing-rooms more refined—would have had sweeter music than Grisi's most artful quaver to a vainer man—nay, once on a time to him. But—sugar-plums come too late! He gained the corner, and roused the solitary sitter.

"My dear Mr. Hartopp, do you not remember me—Guy Darrell?"

"Mr. Darrell!" cried the ex-mayor of Gatesboro', rising, "who could think that you would remember *me?*"

"What! not remember those ten stubborn voters, on whom, all and singly, I had lavished my powers of argument in vain? You came, and with the brief words, 'John—Ned—Dick—oblige me—vote for Darrell!' the men were convinced—the votes won. That's what I call eloquence"—(*sotto voce*—"Confound that fellow! still after me!"—Aside to Hartopp)—"Oh! may I ask who is that Mr.—what's his name—there—in the white waistcoat?"

"Poole," answered Hartopp. "Who is he, sir? A speculative man. He is connected with a new Company—I am told it answers. Williams (that's my foreman—a very long head he has too) has taken shares in the Company, and wanted me to do the same, but 'tis not in my way. And Mr. Poole may be a very honest man, but he does not impress me with that idea. I have grown careless; I know I am liable to be taken in—I was so once—and therefore I avoid 'Companies' upon principle—especially when they promise thirty per cent., and work copper mines—Mr. Poole has a copper mine."

"And deals in brass—you may see it in his face! But you are not in town for good, Mr. Hartopp? If I remember right, you were settled at Gatesboro' when we last met."

"And so I am still—or rather in the neighbourhood. I am gradually retiring from business, and grown more and more fond of farming. But I have a family, and we live in enlightened times, when children require a finer education than their parents had. Mrs. Hartopp thought my daughter Anna Maria was in need of some 'finishing lessons'—very fond of the harp is Anna Maria—and so we have taken a house in London for six weeks. That's Mrs. Hartopp yonder, with the bird on her head—bird of paradise, I believe—Williams says birds of that kind never rest. That bird is an exception—it has rested on Mrs. Hartopp's head for hours together, every evening since we have been in town."

"Significant of your connubial felicity, Mr. Hartopp."

"May it be so of Anna Maria's. She is to be married when her education is finished—married, by the by, to a son of your old friend Jessop, of Ouzelford; and between you and me, Mr. Darrell, that is the reason why I consented to come to town. Do not suppose that I would have a daughter finished unless there was a husband at hand who undertook to be responsible for the results."

"You retain your wisdom, Mr. Hartopp; and I feel sure that not even your fair partner could have brought you up to London unless you had decided on the expediency of coming. Do you remember that I told you the day you so admirably settled a dispute in our committee-room, 'it was well you were not born a king, for you would have been an irresistible tyrant'?"

"Hush! hush!" whispered Hartopp, in great alarm, "if Mrs. H. should hear you! What an observer you are, sir. I thought *I* was a judge of character—but I was once deceived. I dare say you never were."

"You mistake," answered Darrell, wincing, "*you* deceived! How?"

"Oh, a long story, sir. It was an elderly man—the most agreeable, interesting companion—a vagabond nevertheless—and such a pretty bewitching little girl with him, his grandchild. I thought he might have been a wild harum-scarum chap in his day, but that he had a true sense of honour"—(Darrell, wholly uninterested in this narrative, suppressed a yawn, and wondered when it would end). "Only think, sir, just as I was saying to myself, 'I know character—I never was taken in,' down comes a smart fellow—the man's own son—and tells me—or rather he suffers a lady who comes with him to tell me—that this charming old gentleman of high sense of honour was a returned convict—been transported for robbing his employer."

Pale, breathless, Darrell listened, not unheeding now. "What was the name of—of——"

"The convict? He called himself Chapman, but the son's name was Losely—Jasper."

"Ah!" faltered Darrell, recoiling. "And you spoke of a little girl?"

"Jasper Losely's daughter; he came after her with a magistrate's warrant. The old miscreant had carried her off,—to teach her his own swindling ways, I suppose. Luckily she was then in my charge. I gave her back to her father, and the very respectable-looking lady he brought with him. Some relation, I presume."

"What was her name, do you remember?"

"Crane."

"Crane!—Crane!" muttered Darrell, as if trying in vain to tax his memory with that name. "So he said the child was his daughter—are you sure?"

"Oh, of course he said so, and the lady too. But can you be acquainted with them, sir?"

"I?—no! Strangers to me, except by repute. Liars—infamous liars! But have the accomplices quarrelled—I mean the son and father—that the father should be exposed and denounced by the son?"

"I conclude so. I never saw them again. But you believe the father really was, then, a felon, a convict—no excuse for him—no extenuating circumstances? There was something in that man, Mr. Darrell, that made one love him—positively love him; and when I had to tell him that I had given up the child he trusted to my charge, and saw his grief, I felt a criminal myself."

Darrell said nothing, but the character of his face was entirely altered—stern, hard, relentless—the face of an inexorable judge. Hartopp, lifting his eyes suddenly to that countenance, recoiled in awe.

"You think I was a criminal!" he said, piteously.

"I think we are both talking too much, Mr. Hartopp, of a gang of miserable swindlers, and I advise you to dismiss the whole remembrance of intercourse with any of them from your honest breast, and never to repeat to other ears the tale you have poured into mine. Men of honour should crush down the very thought that approaches them to knaves."

Thus saying, Darrell moved off with abrupt rudeness, and passing quickly back through the crowd, scarcely noticed Mrs. Haughton by a retreating nod, nor heeded Lionel at all, but hurried down the stairs. He was impatiently searching for his cloak in the back parlour, when a voice behind said, "Let me assist you, sir—do;" and turning round with petulant quickness, he beheld again Mr. Adolphus Poole. It requires an habitual intercourse with equals to give perfect and invariable control of temper to a man of irritable nerves and frank character; and though, where Darrell really liked, he had much sweet forbearance, and where he was indifferent much stately courtesy, yet, when he was offended, he could be extremely uncivil. "Sir," he cried, almost stamping his foot, "your importunities annoy me; I request you to cease them."

"Oh, I ask your pardon," said Mr. Poole, with an angry growl. "I have no need to force myself on any man. But I beg you to believe that if I presumed to seek your acquaintance, it was to do you a service, sir—yes, a private service, sir." He lowered his voice into a whisper, and laid his finger on his nose—"There's one Jasper Losely, sir—eh? Oh, sir, I'm no mischief-maker. I respect family secrets. Perhaps I might be of use, perhaps not."

"Certainly not to me, sir," said Darrell, flinging the cloak

he had now found across his shoulders, and striding from the house. When he entered his carriage, the footman stood waiting for orders. Darrell was long in giving them. "Anywhere for half an hour—to St. Paul's, then home."

But on returning from this objectless plunge into the City, Darrell pulled the check-string—"to Belgrave Square—Lady Dulcett's."

The concert was half over; but Flora Vyvyan had still guarded, as she had promised, a seat beside herself for Darrell, by lending it for the present to one of her obedient vassals. Her face brightened as she saw Darrell enter and approach. The vassal surrendered the chair. Darrell appeared to be in the highest spirits; and I firmly believe that he was striving to the utmost in his power—what?—to make himself agreeable to Flora Vyvyan? No; to make Flora Vyvyan agreeable to himself. The man did not presume that a fair young lady could be in love with him; perhaps he believed *that*, at his years, to be impossible. But he asked what seemed much easier, and was much harder—he asked to be himself in love.

CHAPTER V.

It is asserted by those learned men who have devoted their lives to the study of the manners and habit of insect society, that when a spider has lost its last web, having exhausted all the glutinous matter wherewith to spin another, it still protracts its innocent existence, by obtruding its nippers on some less warlike but more respectable spider, possessed of a convenient home and an airy larder. Observant moralists have noticed the same peculiarity in the Man-Eater, or Pocket-Cannibal.

ELEVEN o'clock, A.M., Samuel Adolphus Poole, Esq., is in his parlour,—the house one of those new dwellings which yearly spring up north of the Regent's Park—dwellings that, attesting the eccentricity of the national character, task the fancy of the architect and the gravity of the beholder—each tenement so tortured into contrast with the other, that, on one little rood of ground, all ages seemed blended, and all races encamped. No. 1 is an Egyptian tomb!—Pharaohs may repose there! No. 2 is a Swiss *chalet*—William Tell may be shooting in its garden! Lo! the severity of Doric columns—Sparta is before you! Behold that Gothic porch—you are rapt to the Norman days! Ha! those Elizabethan mullions—Sidney and Raleigh, rise

again! Ho! the trellises of China—come forth, Confucius, and Commissioner Yeh! Passing a few paces, we are in the land of the Zegri and Abencerrage—

"Land of the dark-eyed Maid and dusky Moor."

Mr. Poole's house is called Alhambra Villa! Moorish verandahs—plate-glass windows, with cusped heads and mahogany sashes—a garden behind, a smaller one in front—stairs ascending to the doorway under a Saracenic portico, between two pedestalled lions that resemble poodles—the whole new and lustrous—in semblance stone, in substance stucco—cracks in the stucco denoting "settlements." But the house being let for ninety-nine years—relet again on a running lease of seven, fourteen, and twenty-one—the builder is not answerable for duration, nor the original lessee for repairs. Take it altogether, than Alhambra Villa masonry could devise no better type of modern taste and metropolitan speculation.

Mr. Poole, since we saw him between four and five years ago, has entered the matrimonial state. He has married a lady of some money, and become a reformed man. He has eschewed the turf, relinquished belcher neckcloths and Newmarket coats—dropped his old-bachelor acquaintances. When a man marries and reforms, especially when marriage and reform are accompanied with increased income, and settled respectably in Alhambra Villa—relations, before estranged, tender kindly overtures: the world, before austere, becomes indulgent. It was so with Poole—no longer Dolly. Grant that in earlier life he had fallen into bad ways, and, among equivocal associates, had been led on by that taste for sporting which is a manly though a perilous characteristic of the true-born Englishman; he who loves horses is liable to come in contact with blacklegs; the racer is a noble animal; but it is his misfortune that the better his breeding the worse his company:—Grant that in the stables, Adolphus Samuel Poole had picked up some wild oats—he had sown them now. Bygones were bygones. He had made a very prudent marriage. Mrs. Poole was a sensible woman—had rendered him domestic, and would keep him straight! His uncle Samuel, a most worthy man, had found him that sensible woman, and, having found her, had paid his nephew's debts, and adding a round sum to the lady's fortune, had

seen that the whole was so tightly settled on wife and children, that Poole had the tender satisfaction of knowing that, happen what might to himself, those dear ones were safe; nay, that if, in the reverses of fortune, he should be compelled by persecuting creditors to fly his native shores, law could not impair the competence it had settled upon Mrs. Poole, nor destroy her blessed privilege to share that competence with a beloved spouse. Insolvency itself, thus protected by a marriage settlement, realises the sublime security of VIRTUE immortalised by the Roman Muse :—

——"Repulsæ nescia sordidæ,
Intaminatis fulget honoribus;
Nec sumit aut ponit secures
Arbitrio popularis auræ."

Mr. Poole was an active man in the parish vestry—he was a sound politician—he subscribed to public charities—he attended public dinners—he had votes in half a dozen public institutions—he talked of the public interests, and called himself a public man. He chose his associates amongst gentlemen in business—speculative, it is true, but steady. A joint stock company was set up; he obtained an official station at its board, coupled with a salary—not large, indeed, but still a salary.

"The money," said Adolphus Samuel Poole, "is not my object; but I like to have something to do." I cannot say how he did something, but no doubt somebody was done.

Mr. Poole was in his parlour, reading letters and sorting papers, before he departed to his office in the West End. Mrs. Poole entered, leading an infant who had not yet learned to walk alone, and denoting, by an interesting enlargement of shape, a kindly design to bless that infant, at no distant period, with a brother or sister, as the case might be.

"Come and kiss Pa, Johnny," said she to the infant.

"Mrs. Poole, I am busy," growled Pa.

"Pa's busy—working hard for little Johnny. Johnny will be the better for it some day," said Mrs. Poole, tossing the infant half up to the ceiling, in compensation for the loss of the paternal kiss.

"Mrs. Poole, what do you want?"

"May I hire Jones's brougham for two hours to-day, to

pay visits? There are a great many cards we ought to leave; is there any place where I should leave a card for you, lovey—any person of consequence you were introduced to at Mrs. Haughton's last night? That great man they were all talking about, to whom you seemed to take such a fancy, Samuel, duck——"

"Do get out! that man insulted me, I tell you."

"Insulted you! No; you never told me."

"I did tell you last night coming home."

"Dear me, I thought you meant that Mr. Hartopp."

"Well, *he* almost insulted me, too. Mrs. Poole, you are stupid and disagreeable. Is that all you have to say?"

"Pa's cross, Johnny dear! poor Pa!—people have vexed Pa, Johnny—naughty people. We must go or we shall vex him too."

Such heavenly sweetness on the part of a forbearing wife would have softened Tamburlane. Poole's sullen brow relaxed. If women knew how to treat men, not a husband, unhenpecked, would be found from Indos to the Pole. And Poole, for all his surly demeanour, was as completely governed by that angel as a bear by his keeper.

"Well, Mrs. Poole, excuse me. I own I am out of sorts to-day—give me little Johnny—there (kissing the infant, who in return makes a dig at Pa's left eye, and begins to cry on finding that he has not succeeded in digging it out) —take the brougham. Hush, Johnny—hush—and you may leave a card for me at Mr. Peckham's, Harley Street. My eye smarts horribly; that baby will gouge me one of these days."

Mrs. Poole had succeeded in stilling the infant, and confessing that Johnny's fingers are extremely strong for his age—but, adding that babies will catch at whatever is very bright and beautiful, such as gold and jewels and Mr. Poole's eyes, administers to the wounded orb so soothing a lotion of pity and admiration that Poole growls out quite mildly—"Nonsense, blarney—by the by, I did not say this morning that you should not have the rosewood chiffoniere?"

"No, you said you could not afford it, duck; and when Pa says he can't afford it, Pa must be the judge—must not he, Johnny dear?"

"But perhaps I can afford it. Yes, you may have it—

yes, I say, you *shall* have it. Don't forget to leave that card on Peckham—he's a moneyed man. There's a ring at the bell. Who is it? run and see."

Mrs. Poole obeyed with great activity, considering her interesting condition. She came back in half a minute.

"Oh, my Adolphus! oh, my Samuel! it is that dreadful-looking man who was here the other evening—stayed with you so long. I don't like his looks at all. Pray don't be at home."

"I must," said Poole, turning a shade paler, if that were possible. "Stop—don't let that girl go to the door; and you—leave me." He snatched his hat and gloves, and putting aside the parlour-maid, who had emerged from the shades below in order to answer the "ring," walked hastily down the small garden.

Jasper Losely was stationed at the little gate. Jasper was no longer in rags, but he was coarsely clad—clad as if he had resigned all pretence to please a lady's eye, or to impose upon a West-End tradesman—a check shirt—a rough pea-jacket, his hands buried in its pockets.

Poole started with well-simulated surprise. "What, you! I am just going to my office—in a great hurry at present."

"Hurry or not, I must and will speak to you," said Jasper, doggedly.

"What now? then, step in;—only remember I can't give you more than five minutes."

The rude visitor followed Poole into the back parlour, and closed the door after him.

Leaning his arms over a chair, his hat still on his head, Losely fixed his fierce eyes on his old friend, and said in a low, set, determined voice,—"Now, mark me, Dolly Poole, if you think to shirk my business, or throw me over, you'll find yourself in Queer Street. Have you called on Guy Darrell, and put my case to him, or have you not?"

"I met Mr. Darrell only last night, at a very genteel party." (Poole deemed it prudent not to say by whom that genteel party was given, for it will be remembered that Poole had been Jasper's confidant in that adventurer's former designs upon Mrs. Haughton; and if Jasper knew that Poole had made her acquaintance, might he not insist upon Poole's reintroducing him as a visiting acquaintance?) "A very genteel party," repeated Poole. "I

made a point of being presented to Mr. Darrell, and very polite he was at first."

"Curse his politeness—get to the point."

"I sounded my way very carefully, as you may suppose; and when I had got him into friendly chat, you understand, I began: Ah! my poor Losely, nothing to be done *there*—he flew off in a tangent—as much as desired me to mind my own business, and hold my tongue; and upon my life, I don't think there is a chance for you in that quarter."

"Very well—we shall see. Next, have you taken any steps to find out the girl, my daughter?"

"I have, I assure you. But you give me so slight a clue. Are you quite sure she is not in America after all?"

"I have told you before that that story about America was all bosh! a stratagem of the old gentleman's to deceive me. Poor old man," continued Jasper, in a tone that positively betrayed feeling—"I don't wonder that he dreads and flies me; yet I would not hurt him more than I have done, even to be as well off as you are—blinking at me from your mahogany perch like a pet owl with its crop full of mice. And if I would take the girl from him, it is for her own good. For if Darrell could be got to make a provision on her, and, through her, on myself, why, of course the old man should share the benefit of it. And now that these infernal pains often keep me awake half the night, I can't always shut out the idea of that old man wandering about the world, and dying in a ditch. And that runaway girl—to whom, I dare swear, he would give away his last crumb of bread—ought to be an annuity to us both: Basta, basta! As to the American story—I had a friend at Paris, who went to America on a speculation; I asked him to inquire about this William Waife and his granddaughter Sophy, who were said to have sailed for New York nearly five years ago, and he saw the very persons—settled in New York—no longer under the name of Waife, but their true name of Simpson, and got out from the man that they had been induced to take their passage from England in the name of Waife, at the request of a person whom the man would not give up, but to whom he said he was under obligations. Perhaps the old gentleman had done the fellow a kind turn in early life. The description of this *soi-disant* Waife and his grandchild

settles the matter—wholly unlike those I seek; so that there is every reason to suppose they must still be in England, and it is your business to find them. Continue your search—quicken your wits—let me be better pleased with your success when I call again this day week—and meanwhile four pounds, if you please—as much more as you like."

"Why, I gave you four pounds the other day, besides six pounds for clothes; it can't be gone."

"Every penny."

"Dear, dear! can't you maintain yourself anyhow? Can't you get any one to play at cards? Four pounds! Why, with your talent for whist, four pounds are a capital!"

"Whom can I play with? Whom can I herd with?—Cracksmen and pickpockets. Fit me out; ask me to your own house; invite your own friends; make up a rubber, and you will then see what I can do with four pounds; and may go shares if you like, as we used to do."

"Don't talk so loud. Losely, you know very well that what you ask is impossible. I've turned over a new leaf."

"But I've still got your handwriting on the old leaf"

"What's the good of these stupid threats? If you really wanted to do me a mischief, where could you go to, and who'd believe you?"

"I fancy your wife would. I'll try. Hillo—"

"Stop—stop—stop. No row here, sir. No scandal. Hold your tongue, or I'll send for the police."

"Do! Nothing I should like better. I'm tired out. I want to tell my own story at the Old Bailey, and have my revenge upon you, upon Darrell, upon all. Send for the police."

Losely threw himself at length on the sofa—(new morocco, with spring cushions)—and folded his arms.

"You could only give me five minutes—they are gone, I fear. I am more liberal. I give you your own time to consider. I don't care if I stay to dine; I daresay Mrs. Poole will excuse my dress."

"Losely, you are such a—fellow! If I do give you the four pounds you ask, will you promise to shift for yourself somehow, and molest me no more?"

"Certainly not. I shall come once every week for the same sum I can't live upon less—until—"

"Until what?"

"Until either you get Mr. Darrell to settle on me a suitable provision; or until you place me in possession of my daughter, and I can then be in a better condition to treat with him myself; for if I would make a claim on account of the girl, I must produce the girl, or he may say she is dead. Besides, if she be as pretty as she was when a child, the very sight of her might move him more than all my talk."

"And if I succeed in doing anything with Mr. Darrell, or discovering your daughter, you will give up all such letters and documents of mine as you say you possess?"

"'Say I possess!' I have shown them to you in this pocket-book, Dolly Poole—your own proposition to rob old Latham's safe."

Poole eyed the book, which the ruffian took out and tapped. Had the ruffian been a slighter man, Poole would have been a braver one. As it was—he eyed and groaned. "Turn against one's own crony! So unhandsome, so unlike what I thought you were."

"It is you who would turn against me. But stick to Darrell, or find me my daughter, and help her and me to get justice out of him; and you shall not only have back these letters, but I'll pay you handsomely—handsomely, Dolly Poole. Zooks, sir—I am fallen—but I am always a gentleman."

Therewith Losely gave a vehement slap to his hat, which, crushed by the stroke, improved his general appearance into an aspect so outrageously raffish, that but for the expression of his countenance the contrast between the boast and the man would have been ludicrous even to Mr. Poole. The countenance was too dark to permit laughter. In the dress, but the ruin of fortune—in the face, the ruin of man.

Poole heaved a deep sigh, and extended four sovereigns. Losely rose and took them carelessly. "This day week," he said—shook himself—and went his way.

CHAPTER VI.

Fresh touches to the Three Vignettes for the Book of Beauty.

WEEKS passed—the London season was beginning—Darrell had decided nothing—the prestige of his position was undiminished,—in politics, perhaps higher. He had succeeded in reconciling some great men; he had strengthened—it might be saved, a jarring cabinet. In all this he had shown admirable knowledge of mankind, and proved that time and disuse had not lessened his powers of perception. In his matrimonial designs, Darrell seemed more bent than ever upon the hazard—irresolute as ever on the choice of a partner. Still the choice appeared to be circumscribed to the fair three who had been subjected to Colonel Morley's speculative criticism—Lady Adela, Miss Vipont, Flora Vyvyan. Much *pro* and *con* might be said in respect to each. Lady Adela was so handsome that it was a pleasure to look at her; and that is much when one sees the handsome face every day,—provided the pleasure does not wear off. She had the reputation of a very good temper; and the expression of her countenance confirmed it. There, panegyric stopped; but detraction did not commence. What remained was inoffensive commonplace. She had no salient attribute, and no ruling passion. Certainly she would never have wasted a thought on Mr. Darrell, nor have discovered a single merit in him, if he had not been quoted as a very rich man of high character in search of a wife, and if her father had not said to her—"Adela, Mr. Darrell has been greatly struck with your appearance—he told me so. He is not young, but he is still a very fine-looking man, and you are twenty-seven. 'Tis a greater distinction to be noticed by a person of his yéars and position, than by a pack of silly young fellows, who think more of their own pretty faces than they would ever do of yours. If you did not mind a little disparity of years, he would make you a happy wife; and, in the course of nature, a widow, not too old to enjoy liberty, and with a jointure that might entitle you to a still better match."

Darrell, thus put into Lady Adela's head, he remained there, and became an *idée fixe*. Viewed in the light of a probable husband, he was elevated into an "interesting

man." She would have received his addresses with gentle complacency; and being more the creature of habit than impulse, would, no doubt, in the intimacy of connubial life, have blest him, or any other admiring husband, with a reasonable modicum of languid affection. Nevertheless, Lady Adela was an unconscious impostor; for, owing to a mild softness of eye and a susceptibility to blushes, a victim ensnared by her beauty would be apt to give her credit for a nature far more accessible to the romance of the tender passion, than, happily perhaps for her own peace of mind, she possessed; and might flatter himself that he had produced a sensation which gave that softness to the eye, and that damask to the blush.

Honoria Vipont would have been a choice far more creditable to the good sense of so mature a wooer. Few better specimens of a young lady brought up to become an accomplished woman of the world. She had sufficient instruction to be the companion of an ambitious man—solid judgment to fit her for his occasional adviser. She could preside with dignity over a stately household—receive with grace distinguished guests. Fitted to administer an ample fortune, ample fortune was necessary to the development of her excellent qualities. If a man of Darrell's age were bold enough to marry a young wife, a safer wife amongst the young ladies of London he could scarcely find; for though Honoria was only three-and-twenty, she was as staid, as sensible, and as remote from all girlish frivolities, as if she had been eight-and-thirty. Certainly had Guy Darrell been of her own years, his fortune unmade, his fame to win, a lawyer residing at the back of Holborn, or a petty squire in the petty demesnes of Fawley, he would have had no charm in the eyes of Honoria Vipont. Disparity of years was in this case not his drawback but his advantage, since to that disparity Darrell owed the established name and the eminent station which made Honoria think she elevated her own self in preferring him. It is but justice to her to distinguish here between a woman's veneration for the attributes of respect which a man gathers round him, and the more vulgar sentiment which sinks the man altogether, except as the necessary fixture to be taken in with the general valuation. It is not fair to ask if a girl who entertains a preference for one of our toiling, stirring, ambitious sex, who may be double her age or

have a snub nose, but who looks dignified and imposing on a pedestal of state, whether she would like him as much if stripped of all his accessories, and left unredeemed to his baptismal register or unbecoming nose. Just as well ask a girl in love with a young Lothario if she would like him as much if he had been ugly and crooked. The high name of the one man is as much a part of him as good looks are to the other. Thus, though it was said of Madame de la Vallière that she loved Louis XIV. for himself and not for his regal grandeur, is there a woman in the world, however disinterested, who believes that Madame de la Vallière would have liked Louis XIV. as much if Louis XIV. had been Mr. John Jones? Honoria would not have bestowed her hand on a brainless, worthless nobleman, whatever his rank or wealth. She was above that sort of ambition; but neither would she have married the best-looking and worthiest John Jones who ever bore that British appellation, if he had not occupied the social position which brought the merits of a Jones within range of the eyeglass of a Vipont.

Many girls in the nursery say to their juvenile confidants, "I will only marry the man I love." Honoria had ever said, "I will only marry the man I respect." Thus it was her respect for Guy Darrell that made her honour him by her preference. She appreciated his intellect—she fell in love with the reputation which the intellect had acquired. And Darrell might certainly choose worse. His cool reason inclined him much to Honoria. When Alban Morley argued in her favour, he had no escape from acquiescence, except in the turns and doubles of his ironical humour. But his heart was a rebel to his reason; and between you and me, Honoria was exactly one of those young women by whom a man of grave years ought to be attracted, and by whom, somehow or other, he never is;—I suspect, because the older we grow the more we love youthfulness of character. When Alcides, having gone through all the fatigues of life, took a bride in Olympus, he ought to have selected Minerva, but he chose Hebe.

Will Darrell find his Hebe in Flora Vyvyan? Alban Morley became more and more alarmed by that apprehension. He was shrewd enough to recognise in her the girl of all others formed to glad the eye and plague the heart of a grave and reverend seigneur. And it might well not

only flatter the vanity, but beguile the judgment, of a man who feared his hand would be accepted only for the sake of his money, that Flora just at this moment refused the greatest match in the kingdom, young Lord Vipont, son of the new Earl of Montfort, a young man of good sense, high character, well-looking as men go—heir to estates almost royal;—a young man whom no girl on earth is justified in refusing. But would the whimsical creature accept Darrell? Was she not merely making sport of him, and if, caught by her arts, he, sage and elder, solemnly offered homage and hand to that *belle dedaigneuse* who had just doomed to despair a comely young magnate with five times his fortune, would she not hasten to make him the ridicule of London.

Darrell had perhaps his secret reasons for thinking otherwise, but he did not confide them even to Alban Morley. This much only will the narrator, more candid, say to the reader,—If out of the three whom his thoughts fluttered round, Guy Darrell wished to select the one who would love him best—love him with the whole fresh unreasoning heart of a girl whose childish frowardness sprang from childlike innocence, let him dare the hazard of refusal and of ridicule; let him say to Flora Vyvyan, in the pathos of his sweet deep voice, "Come, and be the spoiled darling of my gladdened age; let my life, ere it sink into night, be rejoiced by the bloom and fresh breeze of the morning."

But to say it he must wish it; he himself must love—love with all the lavish indulgence, all the knightly tenderness, all the grateful sympathising joy in the youth of the beloved, when youth for the lover is no more, which alone can realise what we sometimes see, though loth to own it—congenial unions with unequal years. If Darrell feel not that love, woe to him, woe and thrice shame if he allure to his hearth one who might indeed be a Hebe to the spouse who gave up to her his whole heart in return for hers; but to the spouse, who had no heart to give, or gave but the chips of it, the Hebe indignant would be worse than Erinnys!

All things considered, then, they who wish well to Guy Darrell must range with Alban Morley in favour of Miss Honoria Vipont. She, proffering affectionate respect—Darrell responding by rational esteem. So, perhaps, Darrell himself thought, for whenever Miss Vipont was named, he became more taciturn, more absorbed in reflection, and

sighed heavily, like a man who slowly makes up his mind to a decision, wise, but not tempting.

CHAPTER VII.

Containing much of that information which the wisest men in the world could not give, but which the Author can.

"DARRELL," said Colonel Morley, "you remember my nephew George as a boy? He is now the rector of Humberston; married—a very nice sort of woman—suits him. Humberston is a fine living; but his talents are wasted there. He preached for the first time in London last year, and made a considerable sensation. This year he has been much out of town. He has no church here as yet. I hope to get him one. Carr is determined that he shall be a Bishop. Meanwhile he preaches at —— Chapel to-morrow; come and hear him with me, and then tell me frankly—is he eloquent or not?"

Darrell had a prejudice against fashionable preachers; but to please Colonel Morley he went to hear George. He was agreeably surprised by the pulpit oratory of the young divine. It had that rare combination of impassioned earnestness, with subdued tones, and decorous gesture, which suits the ideal of ecclesiastical eloquence conceived by an educated English Churchman—

"Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

Occasionally the old defect in utterance was discernible; there was a gasp as for breath, or a prolonged dwelling upon certain syllables, which, occurring in the most animated passages, and apparently evincing the preacher's struggle with emotion, rather served to heighten the sympathy of the audience. But, for the most part, the original stammer was replaced by a felicitous pause, the pause as of a thoughtful reasoner or a solemn monitor knitting ideas, that came too quick, into method, or chastening impulse into disciplined zeal. The mind of the preacher, thus not only freed from trammel, but armed for victory, came forth with that power which is peculiar to an original intellect—the power which suggests more than it demonstrates. He did not so much preach to his

audience, as wind himself through unexpected ways into the hearts of the audience; and they who heard suddenly found their hearts preaching to themselves. He took for his text—"Cast down, but not destroyed;" and out of this text he framed a discourse full of true Gospel tenderness, which seemed to raise up comfort as the saving, against despair as the evil, principle of mortal life. The congregation was what is called "brilliant"—statesmen, and peers, and great authors, and fine ladies—people whom the inconsiderate believe to stand little in need of comfort, and never to be subjected to despair. In many an intent or drooping face in that brilliant congregation might be read a very different tale. But of all present there was no one whom the discourse so moved as a woman, who, chancing to pass that way, had followed the throng into the Chapel, and with difficulty obtained a seat at the far end; a woman who had not been within the walls of a chapel or church for long years—a grim woman, in iron grey. There she sate unnoticed, in her remote corner; and before the preacher had done, her face was hidden behind her clasped hands, and she was weeping such tears as she had not wept since childhood.

On leaving church, Darrell said little more to the Colonel than this—"Your nephew takes me by surprise. The Church wants such men. He will have a grand career, if life be spared to him." Then he sank into a reverie, from which he broke abruptly—"Your nephew was at school with my boy. Had my son lived, what had been *his* career?"

The Colonel, never encouraging painful subjects, made no rejoinder.

"Bring George to see me to-morrow. I shrunk from asking it before: I thought the sight of him would too much revive old sorrows; but I feel I should accustom myself to face every memory. Bring him."

The next day the Colonel took George to Darrell's; but George had been pre-engaged till late at noon, and Darrell was just leaving home, and at his street door, when the uncle and nephew came. They respected his time too much to accept his offer to come in, but walked beside him for a few minutes, as he bestowed upon George those compliments which are sweet to the ears of rising men from the lips of those who have risen.

"I remember you, George, as a boy," said Darrell, "and thanked you then for good advice to a schoolfellow, who is lost to your counsels now." He faltered an instant, but went on firmly, "You had then a slight defect in utterance, which, I understand from your uncle, increased as you grew older; so that I never anticipated for you the fame that you are achieving. *Orator fit*—you must have been admirably taught. In the management of your voice—in the excellence of your delivery, I see that you are one of the few who deem that the Divine Word should not be unworthily uttered. The debater on beer bills may be excused from studying the orator's effects; but all that enforce, dignify, adorn, make the becoming studies of him who strives by eloquence to people heaven; whose task it is to adjure the thoughtless, animate the languid, soften the callous, humble the proud, alarm the guilty, comfort the sorrowful, call back to the fold the lost. Is the culture to be slovenly where the glebe is so fertile? The only field left in modern times for the ancient orator's sublime conceptions, but laborious training, is the Preacher's. And I own, George, that I envy the masters who skilled to the Preacher's art an intellect like yours."

"Masters," said the Colonel. "I thought all those elocution masters failed with you, George. You cured and taught yourself. Did not you? No! Why, then, who was your teacher?"

George looked very much embarrassed, and, attempting to answer, began horribly to stutter.

Darrell, conceiving that a preacher whose fame was not yet confirmed, might reasonably dislike to confess those obligations to elaborate study, which, if known, might detract from his effect, or expose him to ridicule, hastened to change the subject. "You have been to the country, I hear, George; at your living, I suppose?"

"No. I have not been there very lately; travelling about."

"Have you seen Lady Montfort since your return?" asked the Colonel.

"I only returned on Saturday night, I go to Lady Montfort's at Twickenham, this evening."

"She has a delightful retreat," said the Colonel. "But if she wish to avoid admiration, she should not make the banks of the river her favourite haunt. I know some

romantic admirers, who, when she re-appears in the world, may be rival aspirants, and who have much taken to rowing since Lady Montfort has retired to Twickenham. They catch a glimpse of her, and return to boast of it. But they report that there is a young lady seen walking with her—an extremely pretty one—who is she? People ask *me*,—as if I knew everything."

"A companion, I suppose," said George, more and more confused. "But, pardon me, I must leave you now. Good-bye, uncle. Good day, Mr. Darrell."

Darrell did not seem to observe George take leave, but walked on, his hat over his brows, lost in one of his frequent fits of abstracted gloom.

"If my nephew were not married," said the Colonel, "I should regard his embarrassment with much suspicion —embarrassed at every point, from his travels about the country to the question of a young lady at Twickenham. I wonder who that young lady can be—not one of the Viponts, or I should have heard. Are there any young ladies on the Lyndsay side?—Eh, Darrell?"

"What do I care?—your head runs on young ladies," answered Darrell, with peevish vivacity, as he stopped abruptly at Carr Vipont's door.

"And your feet do not seem to run from them," said the Colonel; and, with an ironical salute, walked away, while the expanding portals engulfed his friend.

As he sauntered up St. James's Street, nodding towards the thronged windows of its various clubs, the Colonel suddenly encountered Lionel, and, taking the young gentleman's arm, said, "If you are not very much occupied, will you waste half an hour on me?—I am going homewards."

Lionel readily assented, and the Colonel continued—"Are you in want of your cabriolet to-day, or can you lend it to me? I have asked a Frenchman, who brings me a letter of introduction, to dine at the nearest *restaurant's* to which one can ask a Frenchman. I need not say that is Greenwich; and if I took him in a cabriolet, he would not suspect that he was taken five miles out of town."

"Alas, my dear Colonel, I have just sold my cabriolet."

"What! old-fashioned already!—True, it has been built three months. Perhaps the horse, too, has become an antique in some other collection—silent—um!—cabriolet and horse both sold?"

"Both," said Lionel, ruefully.

"Nothing surprises me that man can do," said the Colonel; "or I should be surprised. When, acting on Darrell's general instructions for your outfit, I bought that horse, I flattered myself that I had chosen well. But rare are good horses—rarer still a good judge of them; I suppose I was cheated, and the brute proved a screw."

"The finest cab-horse in London, my dear Colonel, and every one knows how proud I was of him. But I wanted money, and had nothing else that would bring the sum I required. Oh, Colonel Morley, do hear me!"

"Certainly, I am not deaf, nor is St. James's Street. When a man says, 'I have parted with my horse because I wanted money,' I advise him to say it in a whisper."

"I have been imprudent, at least unlucky, and I must pay the penalty. A friend of mine—that is, not exactly a friend, but an acquaintance—whom I see every day—one of my own set—asked me to sign my name at Paris to a bill at three months' date, as his security. He gave me his honour that I should hear no more of it—he would be sure to take up the bill when due—a man whom I supposed to be as well off as myself! You will allow that I could scarcely refuse—at all events, I did not. The bill became due two days ago; my friend does not pay it, and indeed says he cannot, and the holder of the bill calls on me. He was very civil—offered to renew it—pressed me to take my time, &c.; but I did not like his manner: and as to my friend, I find that, instead of being well off, as I supposed, he is hard up, and that I am not the first he has got into the same scrape—not intending it, I am sure. He's really a very good fellow, and if I wanted security, would be it to-morrow to any amount."

"I've no doubt of it—to any amount!" said the Colonel.

"So I thought it best to conclude the matter at once. I had saved nothing from my allowance, munificent as it is. I could not have the face to ask Mr. Darrell to remunerate me for my own imprudence. I should not like to borrow from my mother—I know it would be inconvenient to her. I sold both horse and cabriolet this morning. I had just been getting the cheque cashed when I met you. I intend to take the money myself to the bill-holder. I have just the sum—£200."

"The horse alone was worth that," said the Colonel,

with a faint sigh—"not to be replaced. France and Russia have the pick of our stables. However, if it is sold, it is sold—talk no more of it. I hate painful subjects. You did right not to renew the bill—it is opening an account with Ruin; and though I avoid preaching on money matters, or, indeed, any other (preaching is my nephew's vocation, not mine), yet allow me to extract from you a solemn promise never again to sign bills, nor to draw them. Be to your friend what you please except security for him. Orestes never asked Pylades to help him to borrow at fifty per cent. Promise me—your word of honour as a gentleman! Do you hesitate?"

"My dear Colonel," said Lionel frankly, "I do hesitate. I might promise not to sign a money-lender's bill on my own account, though really I think you take rather an exaggerated view of what is, after all, a common occurrence—"

"Do I?" said the Colonel meekly. "I'm sorry to hear it. I detest exaggeration. Go on. You might promise not to ruin yourself—but you object to promise not to help in the ruin of your friend."

"That is exquisite irony, Colonel," said Lionel, piqued; "but it does not deal with the difficulty, which is simply this: When a man whom you call friend—whom you walk with, ride with, dine with almost every day, says to you, 'I am in immediate want of a few hundreds—I don't ask you to lend them to me, perhaps you can't—but assist me to borrow—trust to my honour, that the debt shall not fall on you,' why, then, it seems as if to refuse the favour was to tell the man you call friend that you doubt his honour; and though I have been caught once in that way, I feel that I must be caught very often before I should have the moral courage to say 'No!' Don't ask me, then, to promise—be satisfied with my assurance that, in future at least, I will be more cautious, and if the loss fall on me, why, the worst that can happen is to do again what I do now."

"Nay, you would not perhaps have another horse and cab to sell. In that case, you would do the reverse of what you do now—you would renew the bill—the debt would run on like a snowball—in a year or two you would owe, not hundreds, but thousands. But come in—here we are at my door."

The Colonel entered his drawing-room. A miracle of

exquisite neatness the room was — rather effeminate, perhaps, in its attributes; but that was no sign of the Colonel's tastes, but of his popularity with the ladies. All those pretty things were their gifts. The tapestry on the chairs their work—the *sèvre* on the consoles—the clock on the mantel-shelf—the ink-stand, paper-cutter, taper-stand on the writing-table—their birthday presents. Even the white woolly Maltese dog that sprang from the rug to welcome him—even the flowers in the *jardinier*—even the tasteful cottage-piano, and the very music-stand beside it —and the card-trays, piled high with invitations,—were contributions from the forgiving sex to the unrequiting bachelor.

Surveying his apartment with a complacent air, the Colonel sank into his easy *fauteuil*, and drawing off his gloves leisurely, said—

"No man has more friends than I have—never did I lose one—never did I sign a bill. Your father pursued a different policy—he signed many bills—and lost many friends."

Lionel, much distressed, looked down, and evidently desired to have done with the subject. Not so the Colonel. That shrewd man, though he did not preach, had a way all his own, which was perhaps quite as effective as any sermon by a fashionable layman can be to an impatient youth."

"Yes," resumed the Colonel, "it is the old story. One always begins by being security to a friend. The discredit of the thing is familiarised to one's mind by the false show of generous confidence in another. Then what you have done for a friend, a friend should do for you—a hundred or two would be useful now—you are sure to repay it in three months. To Youth the Future seems safe as the Bank of England, and distant as the peaks of Himalaya. You pledge your honour that in three months you will release your friend. The three months expire. To release the one friend, you catch hold of another—the bill is renewed, premium and interest thrown into the next pay-day—soon the account multiplies, and with it the honour dwindles—your NAME circulates from hand to hand on the back of doubtful paper—your name, which, in all money transactions, should grow higher and higher each year you live, falling down every month like the shares in a swindling

speculation. You begin by what you call trusting a friend, that is, aiding him to self-destruction—buying him arsenic to clear his complexion,—you end by dragging all near you into your own own abyss, as a drowning man would clutch at his own brother. Lionel Haughton, the saddest expression I ever saw in your father's face was when—when—but you shall hear the story."

"No, sir; spare me. Since you so insist on it, I will give the promise—it is enough; and my father—"

"Was as honourable as you when he first signed his name to a friend's bill; and, perhaps, promised to do so no more as reluctantly as you do. You had better let me say on; if I stop now, you will forget all about it by this day twelvemonth; if I go on, you will never forget. There are other examples besides your father; I am about to name one."

Lionel resigned himself to the operation, throwing his handkerchief over his face as if he had taken chloroform.

"When I was young," resumed the Colonel, "I chanced to make acquaintance with a man of infinite whim and humour; fascinating as Darrell himself, though in a very different way. We called him Willy—you know the kind of man one calls by his Christian name, cordially abbreviated—that kind of man seems never to be quite grown up; and, therefore, never rises in life. I never knew a man called Willy after the age of thirty, who did not come to a melancholy end! Willy was the natural son of a rich, helter-skelter, cleverish, maddish, stylish, raffish, four-in-hand Baronet, by a celebrated French actress. The title is extinct now, and so, I believe, is that genus of stylish, raffish, four-in-hand Baronet—Sir Julian Losely—"

"Losely!" echoed Lionel.

"Yes; do you know the name?"

"I never heard it till yesterday. I want to tell you what I did hear then—but after your story—go on."

"Sir Julian Losely (Willy's father) lived with the French lady as his wife, and reared Willy in his house, with as much pride and fondness as if he intended him for his heir. The poor boy, I suspect, got but little regular education; though, of course, he spoke his French mother's tongue like a native; and, thanks also perhaps to his mother, he had an extraordinary talent for mimicry and acting. His father was passionately fond of private

theatricals, and Willy had early practice in that line. I once saw him act Falstaff in a country house, and I doubt if Quin could have acted it better. Well, when Willy was still a mere boy, he lost his mother, the actress. Sir Julian married—had a legitimate daughter—died intestate—and the daughter, of course, had the personal property, which was not much; the heir-at-law got the land, and poor Willy nothing. But Willy was an universal favourite with his father's old friends—wild fellows like Sir Julian himself: amongst them there were two cousins, with large country-houses, sporting men, and bachelors. They shared Willy between them, and quarrelled which should have the most of him. So he grew up to be man, with no settled provision, but always welcome, not only to the two cousins, but at every house in which, like Milton's lark, 'he came to startle the dull night'—the most amusing companion!—a famous shot—a capital horseman—knew the ways of all animals, fishes, and birds; I verily believe he could have coaxed a pug-dog to point, and an owl to sing. Void of all malice, up to all fun. Imagine how much people would court, and how little they would do for, a Willy of that sort. Do I bore you?"

"On the contrary, I am greatly interested."

"One thing a Willy, if a Willy could be wise, ought to do for himself—keep single. A wedded Willy is in a false position. My Willy wedded—for love too—an amiable girl, I believe (I never saw her; it was long afterwards that I knew Willy)—but as poor as himself. The friends and relatives then said—'This is serious: something *must* be done for Willy.' It was easy to say, 'something must be done,' and monstrous difficult to do it. While the relations were consulting, his half-sister, the Baronet's lawful daughter, died, unmarried; and though she had ignored him in life, left him £2,000. 'I have hit it now,' cried one of the cousins; 'Willy is fond of a country life. I will let him have a farm on a nominal rent, his £2,000 will stock it; and his farm, which is surrounded by woods, will be a capital hunting-meet. As long as I live, Willy shall be mounted.'

"Willy took the farm, and astonished his friends by attending to it. It was just beginning to answer when his wife died, leaving him only one child—a boy; and her death made him so melancholy that he could no longer

attend to his farm. He threw it up, invested the proceeds as a capital, and lived on the interest as a gentleman at large. He travelled over Europe for some time—chiefly on foot—came back, having recovered his spirits—resumed his old desultory purposeless life at different country-houses, and at one of those houses I and Charles Haughton met him. Here I pause, to state that Willy Losely at that time impressed me with the idea that he was a thoroughly honest man. Though he was certainly no formalist—though he had lived with wild sets of convivial scapegraces—though, out of sheer high spirits, he would now and then make conventional Proprieties laugh at their own long faces; yet, I should have said that Bayard himself—and Bayard was no saint—could not have been more incapable of a disloyal, rascally, shabby action. Nay, in the plain matter of integrity, his ideas might be called refined, almost Quixotic. If asked to give or to lend, Willy's hand was in his pocket in an instant; but though thrown among rich men—careless as himself—Willy never put his hand into their pockets, never borrowed, never owed. He would accept hospitality—make frank use of your table, your horses, your dogs—but your money, no! He repaid all he took from a host by rendering himself the pleasantest guest that host ever entertained. Poor Willy! I think I see his quaint smile brimming over with sly sport! The sound of his voice was like a cry of 'half-holiday' in a schoolroom. He dishonest! I should as soon have suspected the noonday sun of being a dark lantern! I remember, when he and I were walking home from wild-duck shooting in advance of our companions, a short conversation between us that touched me greatly, for it showed that, under all his levity, there were sound sense and right feeling. I asked him about his son, then a boy at school—'Why, as it was the Christmas vacation, he had refused our host's suggestion to let the lad come down there?' 'Ah,' said he, 'don't fancy that I will lead my son to grow up a scatterbrained good-for-nought like his father. His society is the joy of my life; whenever I have enough in my pockets to afford myself that joy, I go and hire a quiet lodging close by his school, to have him with me from Saturday till Monday all to myself—where he never hears wild fellows call me "Willy," and ask me to mimic. I had hoped to have spent this vacation in this way, but his

school bill was higher than usual, and after paying it, I had not a guinea to spare—obliged to come here where they lodge and feed me for nothing; the boy's uncle on the mother's side—respectable man in business—kindly takes him home for the holidays; but did not ask me, because his wife—and I don't blame her—thinks I'm too wild for a City clerk's sober household.'

"I asked Willy Losely what he meant to do with his son, and hinted that I might get the boy a commission in the army without purchase.

"'No,' said Willy. 'I know what it is to set up for a gentleman on the capital of a beggar. It is to be a shuttlecock between discontent and temptation. I would not have my lost wife's son waste his life as I have done. He would be more spoiled, too, than I have been. The handsomest boy you ever saw—and bold as a lion. Once in that set' (pointing over his shoulders towards some of our sporting comrades, whose loud laughter every now and then reached our ears)—'once in that set, he would never be out of it—fit for nothing. I swore to his mother on her death-bed that I would bring him up to avoid my errors—that he should be no hanger-on and led-Captain! Swore to her that he should be reared according to his real station—the station of his mother's kin—(*I* have no station)—and if I can but see him an honest British trader—respectable, upright, equal to the highest—because no rich man's dependant, and no poor man's jest—my ambition will be satisfied. And now you understand, sir, why my boy is not here.' You would say a father who spoke thus had a man's honest stuff in him. Eh, Lionel!"

"Yes, and a true gentleman's heart, too!"

"So I thought; yet I fancied I knew the world! After that conversation, I quitted our host's roof, and only once or twice afterwards, at country-houses, met William Losely again. To say truth, his chief patrons and friends were not exactly in my set. But your father continued to see Willy pretty often. They took a great fancy to each other. Charlie, you know, was jovial—fond of private theatricals, too; in short, they became great allies. Some years after, as ill-luck would have it, Charles Haughton, while selling off his Middlesex property, was in immediate want of £1,200. He could get it on a bill, but not without security. His bills were already rather down in the

market, and he had already exhausted most of the friends whose security was esteemed by accommodators any better than his own. In an evil hour he had learned that poor Willy had just £1,500 out upon mortgage; and the money-lender, who was lawyer for the property on which the mortgage was, knew it too. It was on the interest of this £1,500 that Willy lived, having spent the rest of his little capital in settling his son as a clerk in a first-rate commercial house. Charles Haughton went down to shoot at the house where Willy was a guest—shot with him—drank with him—talked with him—proved to him, no doubt, that long before the three months were over the Middlesex property would be sold; the bill taken up, Willy might trust to his honour. Willy did trust. Like you, my dear Lionel, he had not the moral courage to say 'No.' Your father, I am certain, meant to repay him; your father never in cold blood meant to defraud any human being; but—your father gambled! A debt of honour at *piquet* preceded the claim of a bill-discounter. The £1,200 were forestalled—your father was penniless. The money-lender came upon Willy. Sure that Charles Haughton would yet redeem his promise, Willy renewed the bill another three months on usurious terms; those months over, he came to town to find your father hiding between four walls, unable to stir out for fear of arrest. Willy had no option but to pay the money; and when your father knew that it was so paid, and that the usury had swallowed up the whole of Willy's little capital, then, I say, I saw upon Charles Haughton's once radiant face the saddest expression I ever saw on mortal man's. And sure I am that all the joys your father ever knew as a man of pleasure were not worth the agony and remorse of that moment. I respect your emotion, Lionel, but you begin as your father began; and if I had not told you this story, you might have ended as your father ended."

Lionel's face remained covered, and it was only by choking gasps that he interrupted the Colonel's narrative. "Certainly," resumed Alban Morley, in a reflective tone—"Certainly that villain—I mean William Losely, for villain he afterwards proved to be—had the sweetest, most forgiving temper! He might have gone about to his kinsmen and friends denouncing Charles Haughton, and saying by what solemn promises he had been undone. But no!

such a story just at that moment would have crushed Charles Haughton's last chance of ever holding up his head again, and Charles told me (for it was through Charles that I knew the tale) that Willy's parting words to him were, 'Do not fret, Charlie—after all, my boy is now settled in life, and I am a cat with nine lives, and should fall on my legs if thrown out of a garret window. Don't fret.' So he kept the secret, and told the money-lender to hold his tongue. Poor Willy! I never asked a rich friend to lend me money but once in my life. It was then. I went to Guy Darrell, who was in full practice, and said to him, 'Lend me one thousand pounds. I may never repay you.' 'Five thousand pounds, if you like it,' said he. 'One will do.' I took the money and sent it to Willy. Alas! he returned it, writing word that 'Providence had been very kind to him; he had just been appointed to a capital place, with a magnificent salary.' The cat had fallen on its legs. He bade me comfort Haughton with that news. The money went back into Darrell's pocket, and perhaps wandered thence to Charles Haughton's creditors. Now for the appointment. At the country-house to which Willy had returned destitute, he had met a stranger (no relation), who said to him, 'You live with these people—shoot their game—break in their horses—see to their farms—and they give you nothing! You are no longer very young—you should lay by your little income, and add to it. Live with me and I will give you £300 a-year. I am parting with my steward—take his place, but be my friend.' William Losely of course closed with the proposition. This gentleman, whose name was Gunston, I had known slightly in former times—(people say I know everybody)—a soured, bilious, melancholy, indolent, misanthropical old bachelor. With a splendid place universally admired, and a large estate universally envied, he lived much alone, ruminating on the bitterness of life and the nothingness of worldly blessings. Meeting Willy at the country-house to which, by some predistined relaxation of misanthropy, he had been decoyed—for the first time for years Mr. Gunston was heard to laugh. He said to himself, 'Here is a man who actually amuses me.' William Losely contrived to give the misanthrope a new zest of existence; and when he found that business could be made pleasant, the rich man conceived

an interest in his own house, gardens, property. For the sake of William's merry companionship, he would even ride over his farms, and actually carried a gun. Meanwhile, the property, I am told, was really well managed. Ah! that fellow Willy was a born genius, and could have managed everybody's affairs except his own. I heard of all this with pleasure—(people say I hear everything)—when one day a sporting man seizes me by the button at Tattersall's—'Do you know the news? Will Losely is in prison on a charge of robbing his employer.'"

"Robbing! incredible!" exclaimed Lionel.

"My dear Lionel, it was after hearing that news that I established as invariable my grand maxim, *Nil admirari*—never to be astonished at anything!"

"But of course he was innocent?"

"On the contrary, he confessed, was committed; pleaded guilty, and was transported! People who knew Willy said that Gunston ought to have declined to drag him before a magistrate, or, at the subsequent trial, have abstained from giving evidence against him; that Willy had been till then a faithful steward; the whole proceeds of the estate had passed through his hands; he might, in transactions for timber, have cheated undetected to twice the amount of the alleged robbery; it must have been a momentary aberration of reason; the rich man should have let him off. But I side with the rich man. His last belief in his species was annihilated. He must have been inexorable. He could never be amused, never be interested again. He *was* inexorable and—vindictive."

"But what were the facts?—what was the evidence?"

"Very little came out on the trial; because, in pleading guilty, the court had merely to consider the evidence which had sufficed to commit him. The trial was scarcely noticed in the London papers. William Losely was not like a known about town. His fame was confined to those who resorted to old-fashioned country-houses, chiefly single men, for the sake of sport. But stay. I felt such an interest in the case, that I made an abstract or *précis*, not only of all that appeared, but all that I could learn of its leading circumstances. 'Tis a habit of mine, whenever any of my acquaintances embroil themselves with the Crown—" The Colonel rose, unlocked a small glazed bookcase, selected from the contents a MS. volume, reseated himself, turned

the pages, found the place sought, and, reading from it, resumed his narrative. "One evening Mr. Gunston came to William Losely's private apartment. Losely had two or three rooms appropriated to himself in one side of the house, which was built in a quadrangle round a courtyard. When Losely opened his door to Mr. Gunston's knock, it struck Mr. Gunston that his manner seemed confused. After some talk on general subjects, Losely said that he had occasion to go to London next morning for a few days on private business of his own. This annoyed Mr. Gunston. He observed that Losely's absence just then would be inconvenient. He reminded him that a tradesman, who lived at a distance, was coming over the next day to be paid for a vinery he had lately erected, and on the charge for which there was a dispute. Could not Losely at least stay to settle it? Losely replied, 'that he had already, by correspondence, adjusted the dispute, having suggested deductions which the tradesman had agreed to, and that Mr. Gunston would only have to give a cheque for the balance —viz. £270.' Thereon Mr. Gunston remarked, 'If you were not in the habit of paying my bills for me out of what you receive, you would know that I seldom give cheques. I certainly shall not give one now, for I have the money in the house.' Losely observed, 'That is a bad habit of yours keeping large sums in your own house. You may be robbed.' Gunston answered, 'Safer than lodging large sums in a country bank. Country banks break. My grandfather lost £1,000 by the failure of a country bank; and my father, therefore, always took his payments in cash, remitting them to London from time to time as he went thither himself. I do the same, and I have never been robbed of a farthing that I know of. Who would rob a great house like this, full of men-servants?'—'That's true,' said Losely; 'so if you are sure you have as much by you, you will pay the bill and have done with it. I shall be back before Sparks the builder comes to be paid for the new barns to the home farm—that will be £600; but I shall be taking money for timber next week. He can be paid out of that.' GUNSTON.—'No, I will pay Sparks, too, out of what I have in my bureau; and the timber-merchant can pay his debt into my London banker's.' LOSELY.—'Do you mean that you have enough for both these bills actually in the house?' GUNSTON.—'Certainly, in the bureau in

my study. I don't know how much I've got. It may be £1,500—it may be £1,700. I have not counted; I am such a bad man of business; but I am sure it is more than £1,400.' Losely made some jocular observation to the effect that if Gunston never kept an account of what he had, he could never tell whether he was robbed, and, therefore, never would be robbed; since, according to Othello,

> 'He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,
> Let him not know it, and he's not robbed at all.'

After that, Losely became absent in manner, and seemed impatient to get rid of Mr. Gunston, hinting that he had the labour-book to look over, and some orders to write out for the bailiff, and that he should start early the next morning."

Here the Colonel looked up from his MS., and said episodically, "Perhaps you will fancy that these dialogues are invented by me after the fashion of the ancient historians? Not so. I give you the report of what passed, as Gunston repeated it *verbatim;* and I suspect that his memory was pretty accurate. Well (here Alban returned to his MS.) Gunston left Willy, and went into his own study, where he took tea by himself. When his valet brought it in, he told the man that Mr. Losely was going to town early the next morning, and ordered the servant to see himself that coffee was served to Mr. Losely before he went. The servant observed 'that Mr. Losely had seemed much out of sorts lately, and that it was perhaps some unpleasant affair connected with the gentleman who had come to see him two days before.' Gunston had not heard of such a visit. Losely had not mentioned it. When the servant retired, Gunston, thinking over Losely's quotation respecting his money, resolved to ascertain what he had in his bureau. He opened it, examined the drawers, and found, stowed away in different places at different times, a larger sum than he had supposed—gold and notes to the amount of £1,975, of which nearly £300 were in sovereigns. He smoothed the notes carefully; and, for want of other occupation, and with a view of showing Losely that he could profit by a hint, he entered the numbers of the notes in his pocket-book, placed them all together in one drawer with the gold, relocked his bureau, and went shortly afterwards to bed. The next day (Losely having gone in the

morning) the tradesman came to be paid for the vinery. Gunston went to his bureau, took out his notes, and found £250 were gone. He could hardly believe his senses. Had he made a mistake in counting? No. There was his pocket-book, the missing notes entered duly therein. Then he re-counted the sovereigns; 142 were gone of them—nearly £400 in all thus abstracted. He refused at first to admit suspicion of Losely; but, on interrogating his servants, the valet deposed, that he was disturbed about two o'clock in the morning by the bark of the house-dog, which was let loose of a night within the front courtyard of the house. Not apprehending robbers, but fearing the dog might also disturb his master, he got out of his window (being on the ground-floor) to pacify the animal; that he then saw, in the opposite angle of the building, a light moving along the casement of the passage between Losely's rooms and Mr. Gunston's study. Surprised at this, at such an hour, he approached that part of the building, and saw the light very faintly through the chinks in the shutters of the study. The passage windows had no shutters, being old-fashioned stone mullions. He waited by the wall a few minutes, when the light again reappeared in the passage; and he saw a figure in a cloak, which, being in a peculiar colour, he recognised at once as Losely's, pass rapidly along; but before the figure had got half through the passage, the light was extinguished, and the servant could see no more. But so positive was he, from his recognition of the cloak, that the man was Losely, that he ceased to feel alarm or surprise, thinking, on reflection, that Losely, sitting up later than usual to transact business before his departure, might have gone into his employer's study for any book or paper which he might have left there. The dog began barking again, and seemed anxious to get out of the courtyard to which he was confined; but the servant gradually appeased him—went to bed, and somewhat overslept himself. When he awoke, he hastened to take the coffee into Losely's room, but Losely was gone. Here there was another suspicious circumstance. It had been a question how the bureau had been opened, the key being safe in Gunston's possession, and there being no sign of force. The lock was one of those rude old-fashioned ones which are very easily picked, but to which a modern key does not readily fit. In the passage there was found a

long nail crooked at the end; and that nail, the superintendent of the police (who had been summoned) had the wit to apply to the lock of the bureau, and it unlocked and re-locked it easily. It was clear that whoever had so shaped the nail could not have used such an instrument for the first time, and must be a practised picklock. That, one would suppose at first, might exonerate Losely; but he was so clever a fellow at all mechanical contrivances, that, coupled with the place of finding, the nail made greatly against him; and still more so, when some nails precisely similar were found on the chimney-piece of an inner room in his apartment, a room between that in which he had received Gunston and his bed-chamber, and used by him both as study and workshop. The nails, indeed, which were very long and narrow, with a Gothic ornamental head, were at once recognised by the carpenter on the estate as having been made according to Losely's directions, for a garden bench to be placed in Gunston's favourite walk, Gunston having remarked, some days before, that he should like a seat there, and Losely having undertaken to make one from a design by Pugin. Still loth to believe in Losely's guilt, Gunston went to London with the police superintendent, the valet, and the neighbouring attorney. They had no difficulty in finding Losely; he was at his son's lodgings in the City, near the commercial house in which the son was a clerk. On being told of the robbery, he seemed at first unaffectedly surprised, evincing no fear. He was asked whether he had gone into the study about two o'clock in the morning? He said, 'No; why should I?' The valet exclaimed, 'But I saw you—I knew you by that old grey cloak, with the red lining. Why, there it is now—on that chair yonder. I'll swear it is the same.' Losely then began to tremble visibly, and grew extremely pale. A question was next put to him as to the nail, but he seemed quite stupefied, muttering—'Good heavens! the cloak—you mean to say you saw that cloak?' They searched his person—found on him some sovereigns, silver, and one bank-note for five pounds. The number on that bank-note corresponded with a number in Gunston's pocket-book. He was asked to say where he got that five-pound note. He refused to answer. Gunston said,—'It is one of the notes stolen from me!' Losely cried fiercely, 'Take care what you say. How do you

know?' Gunston replied,—'I took an account of the numbers of my notes on leaving your room. Here is the memorandum in my pocket-book—see—' Losely looked, and fell back as if shot. Losely's brother-in-law was in the room at the time, and he exclaimed,—'Oh, William! you can't be guilty. You are the honestest fellow in the world. There must be some mistake, gentlemen. Where did you get the note, William—say?'

"Losely made no answer, but seemed lost in thought or stupefaction. 'I will go for your son, William—perhaps he may help to explain.' Losely then seemed to wake up. 'My son! what! would you expose me before my son? he's gone into the country, as you know. What has he to do with it? I took the notes—there—I have confessed—Have done with it,'—or words to that effect.

"Nothing more of importance," said the Colonel, turning over the leaves of his MS., "except to account for the crime. And here we come back to the money-lender. You remember the valet said that a gentleman had called on Losely two days before the robbery. This proved to be the identical bill-discounter to whom Losely had paid away his fortune. This person deposed that Losely had written to him some days before, stating that he wanted to borrow two or three hundred pounds, which he could repay by instalments out of his salary. What would be the terms? The money-lender, having occasion to be in the neighbourhood, called to discuss the matter in person, and to ask if Losely could not get some other person to join in security—suggesting his brother-in-law. Losely replied that it was a favour he would never ask of any one; that his brother-in-law had no pecuniary means beyond his salary as a senior clerk; and, supposing that he (Losely) lost his place, which he might any day, if Gunston were displeased with him—how then could he be sure that his debt would not fall on the security? Upon which the money-lender remarked that the precarious nature of his income was the very reason why a security was wanted. And Losely answered, 'Ay; but you know that you incur that risk, and charge accordingly. Between you and me the debt and the hazard are mere matter of business, but between me and my security it would be a matter of honour.' Finally the money-lender agreed to find the sum required, though asking very high terms. Losely said he would

consider, and let him know. There the conversation ended. But Gunston inquired, 'if Losely had ever had dealings with the money-lender before, and for what purpose it was likely he would want the money now;' and the money-lender answered 'that probably Losely had some sporting or gaming speculations on the sly, for that it was to pay a gambling debt that he had joined Captain Haughton in a bill for £1,200.' And Gunston afterwards told a friend of mine that this it was that decided him to appear as a witness at the trial; and you will observe that if Gunston had kept away there would have been no evidence sufficient to insure conviction. But Gunston considered that the man who could gamble away his whole fortune must be incorrigible, and that Losely, having concealed from him that he had become destitute by such transactions, must have been more than a mere security in a joint bill with Captain Haughton. Gunston could never have understood such an inconsistency in human nature, and the same man who broke open his bureau should have become responsible to the amount of his fortune for a debt of which he had not shared the discredit, and still less that such a man should, in case he had been so generously imprudent, have concealed his loss out of delicate tenderness for the character of the man to whom he owed his ruin. Therefore, in short, Gunston looked on his dishonest steward, not as a man tempted by a sudden impulse in some moment of distress, at which a previous life was belied, but as a confirmed, dissimulating sharper, to whom public justice allowed no mercy. And thus, Lionel, William Losely was prosecuted, tried, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. By pleading guilty, the term was probably made shorter than it otherwise would have been."

Lionel continued too agitated for words. The Colonel, not seeming to heed his emotions, again ran his eye over the MS.

"I observe here that there are some queries entered as to the evidence against Losely. The solicitor whom, when I heard of his arrest, I engaged and sent down to the place on his behalf—"

"You did! Heaven reward you!" sobbed out Lionel. "But my father?—where was he?"

"Then?—in his grave."

Lionel breathed a deep sigh, as of thankfulness,

"The lawyer, I say—a sharp fellow—was of opinion that if Losely had refused to plead guilty, he could have got him off in spite of his first confession—turned the suspicion against some one else. In the passage where the nail was picked up, there was a door into the park. That door was found unbolted in the inside the next morning: a thief might therefore have thus entered, and passed at once into the study. The nail was discovered close by that door; the thief might have dropped it on putting out his light, which, by the valet's account, he must have done, when he was near the door in question, and required the light no more. Another circumstance in Losely's favour: just outside the door, near a laurel-bush, was found the fag-end of one of those small rose-coloured wax-lights which are often placed in lucifer-match boxes. If this had been used by the thief, it would seem as if, extinguishing the light before he stepped into the air, he very naturally jerked away the morsel of taper left, when, in the next moment, he was out of the house. But Losely would not have gone out of the house; nor was he, nor any one about the premises, ever known to make use of that kind of taper, which would rather appertain to the fashionable fopperies of a London dandy. You will have observed, too, the valet had not seen the thief's face. His testimony rested solely on the colours of a cloak, which, on cross-examination, might have gone for nothing. The dog had barked before the light was seen. It was not the light that made him bark. He wished to get out of the courtyard; that looked as if there were some stranger in the grounds beyond. Following up this clue, the lawyer ascertained that a strange man had been seen in the park towards the grey of the evening, walking up in the direction of the house. And here comes the strong point. At the railway station, about five miles from Mr. Gunston's, a strange man had arrived just in time to take his place in the night-train from the north towards London, stopping there at four o'clock in the morning. The station-master remembered the stranger buying the ticket, but did not remark his appearance. The porter did, however, so far notice him as he hurried into a first-class carriage, that he said afterwards to the station-master, 'Why, that gentleman has a grey cloak just like Mr. Losely's. If he had not been thinner and taller, I should have thought it was Mr. Losely.' Well,

Losely went to the same station the next morning, taking an early train, going thither on foot, with his carpet-bag in his hand; and both the porter and station-master declared that he had no cloak on him at the time; and as he got into a second-class carriage, the porter even said to him, ''Tis a sharp morning, sir; I'm afraid you'll be cold.' Furthermore, as to the purpose for which Losely had wished to borrow of the money-lender, his brother-in-law stated that Losely's son had been extravagant, had contracted debts, and was even hiding from his creditors in a county town, at which William Losely had stopped for a few hours on his way to London. He knew the young man's employer had written kindly to Losely several days before, lamenting the son's extravagance; intimating that unless his debts were discharged, he must lose the situation, in which otherwise he might soon rise to competence, for that he was quick and sharp; and that it was impossible not to feel indulgent towards him, he was so lively and so good-looking. The trader added that he would forbear to dismiss the young man as long as he could. It was on the receipt of that letter that Losely had entered into communication with the money-lender, whom he had come to town to seek, and to whose house he was actually going at the very hour of Gunston's arrival. But why borrow of the money-lender, if he had just stolen more money than he had any need to borrow?

"The most damning fact against Losely, by the discovery in his possession of the £5 note, of which Mr. Gunston deposed to have taken the number, was certainly hard to get over; still an ingenious lawyer might have thrown doubt on Gunston's testimony—a man confessedly so careless might have mistaken the number, &c. The lawyer went, with these hints for defence, to see Losely himself in prison; but Losely declined his help—became very angry—said that he would rather suffer death itself than have suspicion transferred to some innocent man; and that, as to the cloak, it had been inside his carpet-bag. So you see, bad as he was, there was something inconsistently honourable left in him still. Poor Willy! he would not even subpœna any of his old friends as to his general character. But even if he had, what could the Court do since he pleaded guilty? And now dismiss that subject, it begins to pain me extremely. You were to

speak to me about some one of the same name when my story was concluded. What is it?"

"I am so confused," faltered Lionel, still quivering with emotion, "that I can scarcely answer you—scarcely re-collect myself. But—but—while you were describing this poor William Losely, his talent for mimicry and acting, I could not help thinking that I had seen him." Lionel proceeded to speak of gentleman Waife. "Can that be the man?"

Alban shook his head incredulously. He thought it so like a romantic youth to detect imaginary resemblances.

"No," said he, "my dear boy. My William Losely could never become a strolling-player in a village fair. Besides, I have good reason to believe that Willy is well off; probably made money in the colony by some lucky hit: for when do you say you saw your stroller? Five years ago? Well, not very long before that date—perhaps a year or two—less than two years, I am sure—this eccentric rascal sent Mr. Gunston, the man who had transported him, £100! Gunston, you must know, feeling more than ever bored and hipped when he lost Willy, tried to divert himself by becoming director in some railway company. The company proved a bubble; all turned their indignation on the one rich man who could pay where others cheated. Gunston was ruined—purse and character—fled to Calais; and there, less than seven years ago, when in great distress, he received from poor Willy a kind, affectionate, forgiving letter, and £100. I have this from Gunston's nearest relation, to whom he told it, crying like a child. Willy gave no address! but it is clear that at the time he must have been too well off to turn mountebank at your miserable exhibition. Poor, dear, rascally, infamous, big-hearted Willy," burst out the Colonel. "I wish to heaven he had only robbed me!"

"Sir," said Lionel, "rely upon it, that man you described never robbed any one—'tis impossible."

"No—very possible!—human nature," said Alban Morley. "And, after all, he really owed Gunston that £100. For out of the sum stolen, Gunston received anonymously, even before the trial, all the missing notes, minus about that £100; and Willy, therefore, owed Gunston the money, but not, perhaps, that kind, forgiving letter. Pass on—quick—the subject is worse than the gout. You have

heard before the name of Losely—possibly. There are many members of the old Baronet's family; but when or where did you hear it?"

"I will tell you; the man who holds the bill (ah, the word sickens me) reminded me when he called that I had seen him at my mother's house—a chance acquaintance of hers—professed great regard for me—great admiration for Mr. Darrell—and then surprised me by asking if I had never heard Mr. Darrell speak of Mr. Jasper Losely."

"Jasper!" said the Colonel; "Jasper!—well, go on."

"When I answered, 'No,' Mr. Poole (that is his name) shook his head, and muttered, 'A sad affair—very bad business—I could do Mr. Darrell a great service if he would let me;' and then went on talking what seemed to me impertinent gibberish about 'family exposures' and 'poverty making men desperate,' and 'better compromise matters;' and finally wound up by begging me, 'if I loved Mr. Darrell, and wished to guard him from very great annoyance and suffering, to persuade him to give Mr. Poole an interview.' Then he talked about his own character in the City, and so forth, and entreating me 'not to think of paying him till quite convenient; that he would keep the bill in his desk; nobody should know of it; too happy to do me a favour'—laid his card on the table, and went away. Tell me, should I say anything to Mr. Darrell about this or not?"

"Certainly not, till I have seen Mr. Poole myself. You have the money to pay him about you? Give it to me, with Mr. Poole's address; I will call, and settle the matter. Just ring the bell." (To the servant entering)—"Order my horse round." Then, when they were again alone, turning to Lionel abruptly, laying one hand on his shoulder, with the other grasping his hand warmly, cordially—"Young man," said Alban Morley, "I love you—I am interested in you—who would not be? I have gone through this story; put myself positively to pain—which I hate—solely for your good. You see what usury and money-lenders bring men to. Look me in the face! Do you feel now that you would have the 'moral courage' you before doubted of? Have you done with such things for ever?"

"For ever, so help me Heaven! The lesson has been cruel, but I do thank and bless you for it."

"I knew you would. Mark this! never treat money

affairs with levity—MONEY IS CHARACTER! Stop. I have bared a father's fault to a son. It was necessary—or even in his grave those faults might have revived in you. Now, I add this, if Charles Haughton—like you, handsome, high-spirited, favoured by men, spoiled by women—if Charles Haughton, on entering life, could have seen, in the mirror I have held up to you, the consequences of pledging the morrow to pay for to-day, Charles Haughton would have been shocked as you are, cured as you will be. Humbled by your own first error, be lenient to all his. Take up his life where I first knew it: when his heart was loyal, his lips truthful. Raze out the interval; imagine that he gave birth to you in order to replace the leaves of existence we thus blot out and tear away. In every error avoided say—'Thus the father warns the son;' in every honourable action, or hard self-sacrifice, say—'Thus the son pays a father's debt.'"

Lionel, clasping his hands together, raised his eyes streaming with tears, as if uttering inly a vow to Heaven. The Colonel bowed his soldier-crest with religious reverence, and glided from the room noiselessly.

CHAPTER VIII.

Being but one of the considerate pauses in a long journey, charitably afforded to the Reader.

COLONEL MORLEY found Mr. Poole at home, just returned from his office; he stayed with that gentleman nearly an hour, and then went straight to Darrell. As the time appointed to meet the French acquaintance, who depended on his hospitalities for a dinner, was now nearly arrived, Alban's conference with his English friend was necessarily brief and hurried, though long enough to confirm one fact in Mr. Poole's statement, which had been unknown to the Colonel before that day, and the admission of which inflicted on Guy Darrell a pang as sharp as ever wrenched confession from the lips of a prisoner in the cells of the Inquisition. On returning from Greenwich, and depositing his Frenchman in some melancholy theatre, time enough for that resentful foreigner to witness theft and murder committed upon an injured countryman's vaudeville, Alban hastened again to Carlton Gardens. He found Darrell

alone, pacing his floor to and fro, in the habit he had acquired in earlier life, perhaps when meditating some complicated law case, or wrestling with himself against some secret sorrow. There are men of quick nerves who require a certain action of the body for the better composure of the mind; Darrell was one of them.

During these restless movements, alternated by abrupt pauses, equally inharmonious to the supreme quiet which characterised his listener's tastes and habits, the haughty gentleman disburdened himself of at least one of the secrets which he had hitherto guarded from his early friend. But as that secret connects itself with the history of a Person about whom it is well that the reader should now learn more than was known to Darrell himself, we will assume our privilege to be ourselves the narrator, and at the cost of such dramatic vivacity as may belong to dialogue, but with the gain to the reader of clearer insight into those portions of the past which the occasion permits us to reveal —we will weave into something like method the more imperfect and desultory communications by which Guy Darrell added to Alban Morley's distasteful catalogue of painful subjects. The reader will allow, perhaps, that we thus evince a desire to gratify his curiosity, when we state, that of Arabella Crane, Darrell spoke but in one brief and angry sentence, and that not by the name in which the reader as yet alone knows her; and it is with the antecedents of Arabella Crane that our explanation will tranquilly commence.

CHAPTER IX.

Grim Arabella Crane.

Once on a time there lived a merchant named Fossett, a widower with three children, of whom a daughter, Arabella, was by some years the eldest. He was much respected, deemed a warm man, and a safe—attended diligently to his business—suffered no partner, no foreman, to dictate or intermeddle—liked his comforts, but made no pretence to fashion. His villa was at Clapham, not a showy but a solid edifice, with lodge, lawn, and gardens chiefly notable for what is technically called *glass*—viz. a range of glass-houses on the most improved principles: the heaviest pines, the

earliest strawberries. "I'm no judge of flowers," quoth Mr. Fossett, meekly. "Give me a plain lawn, provided it be close shaven. But I say to my gardener, 'Forcing is my hobby—a cucumber with my fish all the year round!'" Yet do not suppose Mr. Fossett ostentatious—quite the reverse. He would no more ruin himself for the sake of dazzling others, than he would for the sake of serving them. He liked a warm house, spacious rooms, good living, old wine, for their inherent merits. He cared not to parade them to public envy. When he dined alone, or with a single favoured guest, the best Lafitte, the oldest sherry!—when extending the rites of miscellaneous hospitality to neighbours, relations, or other slight acquaintances—for Lafitte, Julien; and for sherry, Cape!—Thus not provoking vanity, nor courting notice, Mr. Fossett was without an enemy, and seemed without a care. Formal were his manners, formal his household, formal even the stout cob that bore him from Cheapside to Clapham, from Clapham to Cheapside. That cob could not even prick up its ears if it wished to shy—its ears were cropped, so were its mane and its tail.

Arabella early gave promise of beauty, and more than ordinary power of intellect and character. Her father bestowed on her every advantage of education. She was sent to a select boarding-school of the highest reputation; the strictest discipline, the best masters, the longest bills. At the age of seventeen she had become the show pupil of the seminary. Friends wondered somewhat why the prim merchant took such pains to lavish on his daughter the worldly accomplishments which seemed to give him no pleasure, and of which he never spoke with pride. But certainly, if she was so clever—first-rate musician, exquisite artist, accomplished linguist, "it was very nice in old Fossett to bear it so meekly, never crying her up, nor showing her off to less fortunate parents—very nice in him—good sense—greatness of mind."

"Arabella," said the worthy man, one day, a little time after his eldest daughter had left school for good; "Arabella," said he, "Mrs. ——," naming the head teacher in that famous school, "pays you a very high compliment in a letter I received from her this morning. She says it is a pity you are not a poor man's daughter—that you are so steady and so clever that you could make a fortune for yourself as a teacher."

Arabella at that age could smile gaily, and gaily she smiled at the notion conveyed in the compliment.

"No one can guess," resumed the father, twirling his thumbs, and speaking rather through his nose, "the ups and downs in this mortal sphere of trial, 'specially in the mercantile community. If ever, when I'm dead and gone, adversity should come upon you, you will gratefully remember that I have given you the best of education, and take care of your little brother and sister, who are both—stupid!"

These doleful words did not make much impression on Arabella, uttered as they were in a handsome drawing-room, opening on the neat-shaven lawn it took three gardeners to shave, with a glittering side-view of those galleries of glass in which strawberries were ripe at Christmas, and cucumbers never failed to fish. Time went on. Arabella was now twenty-three—a very fine girl, with a decided manner—much occupied by her music, her drawing, her books, and her fancies. Fancies—for, like most girls with very active heads and idle hearts, she had a vague yearning for some excitement beyond the monotonous routine of a young lady's life; and the latent force of her nature inclined her to admire whatever was out of the beaten track—whatever was wild and daring. She had received two or three offers from young gentlemen in the same mercantile community as that which surrounded her father in this sphere of trial. But they did not please her; and she believed her father when he said that they only courted her under the idea that he would come down with something handsome; "whereas," said the merchant, "I hope you will marry an honest man, who will like you for yourself, and wait for your fortune till my will is read. As King William says to his son, in the *History of England*, 'I don't mean to strip till I go to bed.'"

One night, at a ball in Clapham, Arabella saw the man who was destined to exercise so baleful an influence over her existence. Jasper Losely had been brought to this ball by a young fellow-clerk in the same commercial house as himself; and then in all the bloom of that conspicuous beauty, to which the miniature Arabella had placed before his eyes so many years afterwards did but feeble justice, it may well be conceived that he concentred on himself the admiring gaze of the assembly. Jasper was younger than

Arabella; but, what with the height of his stature and the self-confidence of his air, he looked four or five and twenty. Certainly, in so far as the distance from childhood may be estimated by the loss of innocence, Jasper might have been any age! He was told that old Fossett's daughter would have a very fine fortune; that she was a strong-minded young lady, who governed her father, and would choose for herself; and accordingly he devoted himself to Arabella the whole of the evening. The effect produced on the mind of this ill-fated woman by her dazzling admirer was as sudden as it proved to be lasting. There was a strange charm in the very contrast between his rattling audacity and the bashful formalities of the swains who had hitherto wooed her as if she frightened them. Even his good looks fascinated her less than that vital energy and power about the lawless brute, which to her seemed the elements of heroic character, though but the attributes of riotous spirits, magnificent formation, flattered vanity, and imperious egotism. She was a bird gazing spell-bound on a gay young boa-constrictor, darting from bough to bough, sunning its brilliant hues, and showing off all its beauty, just before it takes the bird for its breakfast.

When they parted that night, their intimacy had so far advanced that arrangements had been made for its continuance. Arabella had an instinctive foreboding that her father would be less charmed than herself with Jasper Losely; that, if Jasper were presented to him, he would possibly forbid her farther acquaintance with a young clerk, however superb his outward appearance. She took the first false step. She had a maiden aunt by the mother's side, who lived in Bloomsbury, gave and went to small parties, to which Jasper could easily get introduced. She arranged to pay a visit for some weeks to this aunt, who was then very civil to her, accepting with marked kindness seasonable presents of strawberries, pines, spring chickens, and so forth, and offering in turn, whenever it was convenient, a spare room, and whatever amusement a round of small parties, and the innocent flirtations incidental thereto, could bestow. Arabella said nothing to her father about Jasper Losely, and to her aunt's she went. Arabella saw Jasper very often; they became engaged to each other, exchanged vows and love-tokens, locks of hair, &c. Jasper, already much troubled by duns, became naturally ardent to

insure his felicity and Arabella's supposed fortune. Arabella at last summoned courage, and spoke to her father. To her delighted surprise, Mr. Fossett, after some moralizing, more on the uncertainty of life in general than her clandestine proceedings in particular, agreed to see Mr. Jasper Losely, and asked him down to dinner. After dinner, over a bottle of Lafitte, in an exceedingly plain but exceedingly weighty silver jug, which made Jasper's mouth water (I mean the jug), Mr. Fossett, commencing with that somewhat coarse though royal saying of William the Conqueror, with which he had before edified his daughter, assured Jasper that he gave his full consent to the young gentleman's nuptials with Arabella, provided Jasper or his relations would maintain her in a plain respectable way, and wait for her fortune till his (Fossett's) will was read. What that fortune would be, Mr. Fossett declined even to hint. Jasper went away very much cooled. Still the engagement remained in force; the nuptials were tacitly deferred. Jasper and his relations maintain a wife! Preposterous idea! It would take a clan of relations and a Zenana of wives to maintain in that state to which he deemed himself entitled—Jasper himself! But just as he was meditating the possibility of a compromise with old Fossett, by which he would agree to wait till the will was read for contingent advantages, provided Fossett, in his turn, would agree in the meanwhile to afford lodging and board, with a trifle for pocket-money, to Arabella and himself, in the Clapham Villa, which, though not partial to rural scenery, Jasper preferred, on the whole, to a second floor in the City,—old Fossett fell ill, took to his bed; was unable to attend to his business, some one else attended to it; and the consequence was, that the house stopped payment, and was discovered to have been insolvent for the last ten years. Not a discreditable bankruptcy. There might perhaps be seven shillings in the pound ultimately paid, and not more than forty families irretrievably ruined. Old Fossett, safe in his bed, bore the affliction with philosophical composure; observed to Arabella that he had always warned her of the ups and downs in this sphere of trial; referred again with pride to her first-rate education; commended again to her care Tom and Biddy; and, declaring that he died in charity with all men, resigned himself to the last slumber.

Arabella at first sought a refuge with her maiden aunt. But that lady, though not hit in pocket by her brother-in-law's failure, was more vehement against his memory than his most injured creditor—not only that she deemed herself unjustly defrauded of the pines, strawberries, and spring chickens, by which she had been enabled to give small parties at small cost, though with ample show, but that she was robbed of the consequence she had hitherto derived from the supposed expectations of her niece. In short, her welcome was so hostile, and her condolences so cutting, that Arabella quitted her door with a solemn determination never again to enter it.

And now the nobler qualities of the bankrupt's daughter rose at once into play. Left penniless, she resolved by her own exertions to support and to rear her young brother and sister. The great school to which she had been the ornament willingly received her as a teacher, until some more advantageous place in a private family, and with a salary worthy of her talents and accomplishments, could be found. Her intercourse with Jasper became necessarily suspended. She had the generosity to write, offering to release him from his engagement. Jasper considered himself fully released without that letter; but he deemed it neither gallant nor discreet to say so. Arabella might obtain a situation with larger salary than she could possibly need, the superfluities whereof Jasper might undertake to invest. Her aunt had evidently something to leave, though she might have nothing to give. In fine, Arabella, if not rich enough for a wife, might be often rich enough for a friend at need; and so long as he was engaged to her for life, it must be not more her pleasure than her duty to assist him to live. Besides, independently of these prudential though not ardent motives for declaring unalterable fidelity to troth, Jasper at that time really did entertain what he called love for the handsome young woman—flattered that one of attainments so superior to all the girls he had ever known, should be so proud even less of his affection for her, than her own affection for himself. Thus the engagement lasted—interviews none—letters frequent. Arabella worked hard, looking to the future; Jasper worked as little as possible, and was very much bored by the present.

Unhappily, as it turned out, so great a sympathy, not

only amongst the teachers, but amongst her old schoolfellows, was felt for Arabella's reverse; her character for steadiness, as well as talent, stood so high, and there was something so creditable in her resolution to maintain her orphan brother and sister, that an effort was made to procure her a livelihood much more lucrative, and more independent than she could obtain either in a school or a family. Why not take a small house of her own, live there with her fellow-orphans, and give lessons out by the hour? Several families at once agreed so to engage her, and an income adequate to all her wants was assured. Arabella adopted this plan. She took the house; Bridgett Greggs, the nurse of her infancy, became her servant, and soon to that house, stealthily in the shades of evening, glided Jasper Losely. She could not struggle against his influence—had not the heart to refuse his visits—he was so poor—in such scrapes—and professed himself to be so unhappy. There now became some one else to toil for, besides the little brother and sister. But what were Arabella's gains to a man who already gambled? New afflictions smote her. A contagious fever broke out in the neighbourhood; her little brother caught it; her little sister sickened the next day; in less than a week two small coffins were borne from her door by the Black Horses—borne to that plot of sunny turf in the pretty suburban cemetery, bought with the last earnings made for the little ones by the mother-like sister:—Motherless lone survivor! what! no friend on earth, no soother but that direful Jasper! Alas! the truly dangerous Venus is not that Erycina round whom circle Jest and Laughter. Sorrow, and that sense of solitude which makes us welcome a footstep as a child left in the haunting dark welcomes the entrance of light, weaken the outworks of female virtue more than all the vain levities of mirth, or the flatteries which follow the path of Beauty through the crowd. Alas, and alas! let the tale hurry on!

Jasper Losely has still more solemnly sworn to marry his adored Arabella. But when? When they are rich enough. She feels as if her spirit was gone—as if she could work no more. She was no weak commonplace girl, whom love can console for shame. She had been rigidly brought up; her sense of female rectitude was keen; her remorse was noiseless, but it was stern. Harassments of a

more vulgar nature beset her: she had forestalled her sources of income;-she had contracted debts for Jasper's sake;—in vain: her purse was emptied, yet his no fuller. His creditors pressed him; he told her that he must hide. One winter's day he thus departed; she saw him no more for a year. She heard, a few days after he left her, of his father's crime and committal. Jasper was sent abroad by his maternal uncle, at his father's prayer; sent to a commercial house in France, in which the uncle obtained him a situation. In fact, the young man had been despatched to France under another name, in order to save him from the obloquy which his father had brought upon his own.

Soon came William Losely's trial and sentence. Arabella felt the disgrace acutely—felt how it would affect the audacious insolent Jasper; did not wonder that he forbore to write to her. She conceived him bowed by shame, but she was buoyed up by her conviction that they should meet again. For good or for ill, she held herself bound to him for life. But meanwhile the debts she had incurred on his account came upon her. She was forced to dispose of her house; and at this time Mrs. Lyndsay, looking out for some first-rate superior governess for Matilda Darrell, was urged by all means to try and secure for that post Arabella Fossett. The highest testimonials from the school at which she had been reared, from the most eminent professional masters, from the families at which she had recently taught, being all brought to bear upon Mr. Darrell, he authorised Mrs. Lyndsay to propose such a salary as could not fail to secure a teacher of such rare qualifications. And thus Arabella became governess to Miss Darrell.

There is a kind of young lady of whom her nearest relations will say, "I can't make that girl out." Matilda Darrell was that kind of young lady. She talked very little; she moved very noiselessly; she seemed to regard herself as a secret which she had solemnly sworn not to let out. She had been steeped in slyness from her early infancy by a sly mother. Mrs. Darrell was a woman who had always something to conceal. There was always some note to be thrust out of sight; some visit not to be spoken of; something or other which Matilda was not on any account to mention to Papa.

When Mrs. Darrell died, Matilda was still a child, but

she still continued to view her father as a person against whom prudence demanded her to be constantly on her guard. It was not that she was exactly afraid of him—he was very gentle to her, as he was to all children; but his loyal nature was antipathetic to hers. She had no sympathy with him. How confide her thoughts to him? She had an instinctive knowledge that those thoughts were not such as could harmonise with his. Yet, though taciturn, uncaressing, undemonstrative, she appeared mild and docile. Her reserve was ascribed to constitutional timidity. Timid to a degree she usually seemed; yet, when you thought you had solved the enigma, she said or did something so coolly determined, that you were forced again to exclaim, "I can't make that girl out!" She was not quick at her lessons. You had settled in your mind that she was dull, when, by a chance remark, you were startled to find that she was very sharp; keenly observant, when you had fancied her fast asleep. She had seemed, since her mother's death, more fond of Mrs. Lyndsay and Caroline than of any other human beings—always appeared sullen or out of spirits when they were absent; yet she confided to them no more than she did to her father. You would suppose from this description that Matilda could inspire no liking in those with whom she lived. Not so; her very secretiveness had a sort of attraction—a puzzle always creates some interest. Then her face, though neither handsome nor pretty, had in it a treacherous softness—a subdued, depressed expression. A kind observer could not but say with an indulgent pity, "There must be a good deal of heart in that girl, if one could but—make her out."

She appeared to take at once to Arabella, more than she had taken to Mrs. Lyndsay, or even to Caroline, with whom she had been brought up as a sister, but who, then joyous and quick and innocently fearless—with her soul in her eyes and her heart on her lips—had no charm for Matilda, because there she saw no secret to penetrate, and her she had no object in deceiving.

But this stranger, of accomplishments so rare, of character so decided, with a settled gloom on her lip, a gathered care on her brow—*there* was some one to study, and some one with whom she felt a sympathy; for she detected at once that Arabella was also a secret.

At first, Arabella, absorbed in her own reflections, gave to Matilda but the mechanical attention which a professional teacher bestows on an ordinary pupil. But an interest in Matilda sprung up in her breast, in proportion as she conceived a venerating gratitude for Darrell. He was aware of the pomp and circumstance which had surrounded her earlier years; he respected the creditable energy with which she had devoted her talents to the support of the young children thrown upon her care; compassionated her bereavement of those little fellow-orphans for whom toil had been rendered sweet; and he strove, by a kindness of forethought and a delicacy of attention, which were the more prized in a man so eminent and so preoccupied, to make her forget that she was a salaried teacher—to place her saliently, and as a matter of course, in the position of gentlewoman, guest, and friend. Recognising in her a certain vigour and force of intellect apart from her mere accomplishments, he would flatter her scholastic pride, by referring to her memory in some question of reading, or consulting her judgment on some point of critical taste. She, in return, was touched by his chivalrous kindness to the depth of a nature that, though already seriously injured by its unhappy contact with a soul like Jasper's, retained that capacity of gratitude, the loss of which is humanity's last deprivation. Nor this alone: Arabella was startled by the intellect and character of Darrell into that kind of homage which a woman, who has hitherto met but her own intellectual inferiors, renders to the first distinguished personage in whom she recognises, half with humility and half with awe, an understanding and a culture to which her own reason is but the flimsy glass-house, and her own knowledge but the forced exotic.

Arabella, thus roused from her first listlessness, sought to requite Darrell's kindness by exerting every energy to render his insipid daughter an accomplished woman. So far as mere ornamental education extends, the teacher was more successful than, with all her experience, her skill, and her zeal, she had presumed to anticipate. Matilda, without ear, or taste, or love for music, became a very fair mechanical musician. Without one artistic predisposition, she achieved the science of perspective—she attained even to the mixture of colours—she filled a portfolio with drawings which no

young lady need have been ashamed to see circling round a drawing-room. She carried Matilda's thin mind to the farthest bound it could have reached without snapping, through an elegant range of selected histories and harmless feminine classics — through Gallic dialogues — through Tuscan themes—through Teuton verbs—yea, across the invaded bounds of astonished Science into the Elementary Ologies. And all this being done, Matilda Darrell was exactly the same creature that she was before. In all that related to character, to inclinations, to heart, even that consummate teacher could give no intelligible answer, when Mrs. Lyndsay, in her softest accents (and no accents ever were softer), sighed—"Poor dear Matilda! can *you* make her out, Miss Fossett?" Miss Fossett could not make her out. But, after the most attentive study, Miss Fossett had inly decided that there was nothing to make out—that, like many other very nice girls, Matilda Darrell was a harmless nullity, what you call "a Miss:" white deal or willow, to which Miss Fossett had done all in the way of increasing its value as ornamental furniture, when she had veneered it over with rosewood or satinwood, enriched its edges with ormolu, and strewed its surface with nicknacks and albums. But Arabella firmly believed Matilda Darrell to be a quiet, honest, good sort of "Miss," on the whole—very fond of her, Arabella. The teacher had been several months in Darrell's family, when Caroline Lyndsay, who had been almost domesticated with Matilda (sharing the lessons bestowed on the latter, whether by Miss Fossett or visiting masters), was taken away by Mrs. Lyndsay on a visit to the old Marchioness of Montfort. Matilda, who was to come out the next year, was thus almost exclusively with Arabella, who redoubled all her pains to veneer the white deal, and protect with ormolu its feeble edges—so that, when it "came out," all should admire that thoroughly fashionable piece of furniture. It was the habit of Miss Fossett and her pupil to take a morning walk in the quiet retreats of the Green Park; and one morning, as they were thus strolling, nurserymaids and children, and elderly folks, who were ordered to take early exercise, undulating round their unsuspecting way,—suddenly, right upon their path (unlooked-for as the wolf that startled Horace in the Sabine wood, but infinitely more deadly than that runaway animal), came Jasper Losely!

Arabella uttered a faint scream. She could not resist—had no thought of resisting—the impulse to bound forward—lay her hand on his arm. She was too agitated to perceive whether his predominant feeling was surprise or rapture. A few hurried words were exchanged, while Matilda Darrell gave one sidelong glance towards the handsome stranger, and walked quietly by them. On his part, Jasper said that he had just returned to London—that he had abandoned for ever all idea of a commercial life—that his father's misfortune (he gave that gentle appellation to the incident of penal transportation) had severed him from all former friends, ties, habits—that he had dropped the name of Losely for ever — entreated Arabella not to betray it—his name now was Hammond—his "prospects," he said, "fairer than they had ever been." Under the name of Hammond, as an independent gentleman, he had made friends more powerful than he could ever have made under the name of Losely as a city clerk. He blushed to think he had ever been a city clerk. No doubt he should get into some Government office; and then, O then, with assured income and a certainty to rise, he might claim the longed-for hand of the "best of creatures."

On Arabella's part, she hastily explained her present position. She was governess to Miss Darrell—that was Miss Darrell. Arabella must not leave her walking on by herself—she would write to him. Addresses were exchanged—Jasper gave a very neat card—"Mr. Hammond, No. —, Duke Street, St. James's."

Arabella, with a beating heart, hastened to join her friend. At the rapid glance she had taken of her perfidious lover, she thought him, if possible, improved. His dress, always studied, was more to the fashion of polished society, more simply correct—his air more decided. Altogether he looked prosperous, and his manner had never been more seductive, in its mixture of easy self-confidence and hypocritical coaxing. In fact, Jasper had not been long in the French commercial house—to which he had been sent out of the way while his father's trial was proceeding and the shame of it fresh—before certain licenses of conduct had resulted in his dismissal. But, meanwhile, he had made many friends amongst young men of his own age—those loose wild *viveurs* who, without doing anything the law

can punish as dishonest, contrive for a few fast years to live very showily on their wits. In that strange social fermentation which still prevails in a country where an aristocracy of birth, exceedingly impoverished, and exceedingly numerous so far as the right to prefix a *De* to the name, or to stamp a coronet on the card, can constitute an aristocrat—is diffused amongst an ambitious, adventurous, restless, and not inelegant young democracy—each cemented with the other by that fiction of law called *égalité;* in that yet unsettled and struggling society in which so much of the old has been irretrievably destroyed, and so little of the new has been solidly constructed—there are much greater varieties, infinitely more subtle grades and distinctions, in the region of life which lies between respectability and disgrace, than can be found in a country like ours. The French novels and dramas may apply less a mirror than a magnifying-glass to the beings that move through that region. But still those French novels and dramas do not unfaithfully represent the classifications of which they exaggerate the types. Those strange combinations, into one tableau, of students and grisettes, opera-dancers, authors, viscounts, swindlers, romantic Lorettes, gamblers on the Bourse, whose pedigree dates from the Crusades; impostors, taking titles from villages in which their grandsires might have been saddlers—and if detected, the detection but a matter of laugh; delicate women living like lawless men; men making trade out of love, like dissolute women, yet with point of honour so nice, that, doubt their truth or their courage, and—piff!—you are in Charon's boat,—humanity in every civilised land may present single specimens, more or less, answering to each thus described. But where, save in France, find them all, if not precisely in the same *salons*, yet so crossing each other to and fro as to constitute a social phase, and give colour to a literature of unquestionable genius? And where, over orgies so miscellaneously Berycynthian, an atmosphere so elegantly Horatian? And where can coarseness so vanish into polished expression as in that diamond-like language—all terseness and sparkle—which, as friendly to Wit in its airiest prose, as hostile to Passion in its torrent or cloud-wrack of poetry, seems invented by the Grace out of spite to the Muse?

Into circles such as those of which the dim outline is

here so imperfectly sketched, Jasper Losely niched himself, as *le bel Anglais.* (Pleasant representative of the English nation!) Not that those circles are to have the sole credit of his corruption. No! Justice is justice! Stand we up for our native land! *Le bel Anglais* entered those circles a much greater knave than most of those whom he found there. But there, at least, he learned to set a yet higher value on his youth, and strength, and comeliness—on his readiness of resource—on the reckless audacity that brow-beat timid and some even valiant men—on the six feet one of faultless symmetry that captivated foolish, and some even sensible women. Gaming was, however, his vice by predilection. A month before Arabella met him, he had had a rare run of luck. On the strength of it he had resolved to return to London, and (wholly oblivious of "the best of creatures" till she had thus startled him) hunt out and swoop off with an heiress. Three French friends accompanied him. Each had the same object. Each believed that London swarmed with heiresses. They were all three fine-looking men. One was a Count,—at least he said so. But proud of his rank?—not a bit of it: all for liberty (no man more likely to lose it)—all for fraternity (no man you would less love as a brother). And as for *égalité!*—the son of a shoemaker who was *homme de lettres,* and wrote in a journal, inserted a jest on the Count's countship. "All men are equal before the pistol," said the Count; and knowing that in that respect he was equal to most, having practised at *poupées* from the age of fourteen, he called out the son of Crispin and shot him through the lungs. Another of Jasper's travelling friends was an *enfant du peuple*—boasted that he was a foundling. He made verses of lugubrious strain, and taught Jasper how to shuffle at whist. The third, like Jasper, had been designed for trade; and, like Jasper, he had a soul above it. In politics he was a Communist—in talk a Philanthropist. He was the cleverest man of them all, and is now at the galleys. The fate of his two compatriots—more obscure—it is not my duty to discover. In that peculiar walk of life Jasper is as much as I can possibly manage.

It need not be said that Jasper carefully abstained from reminding his old city friends of his existence. It was his object and his hope to drop all identity with that son of a convict who had been sent out of the way to escape

humiliation. In this resolve he was the more confirmed because he had no old city friends out of whom anything could be well got. His poor uncle, who alone of his relations in England had been privy to his change of name, was dead; his end hastened by grief for William Losely's disgrace, and the bad reports he had received from France of the conduct of William Losely's son. That uncle had left, in circumstances too straitened to admit the waste of a shilling, a widow of very rigid opinions; who, if ever by some miraculous turn in the wheel of fortune she could have become rich enough to slay a fatted calf, would never have given the shin-bone of it to a prodigal like Jasper, even had he been her own penitent son, instead of a graceless step-nephew. Therefore, as all civilisation proceeds westward, Jasper turned his face from the east; and had no more idea of re-crossing Temple Bar in search of fortune, friends, or kindred, than a modern Welshman would dream of a pilgrimage to Asian shores to re-embrace those distant relatives whom Hu Gadarn left behind him countless centuries ago, when that mythical chief conducted his faithful Cymrians over the Hazy Sea to this happy island of Honey.*

Two days after his *rencontre* with Arabella in the Green Park, the *soi-disant* Hammond having, in the interim, learned that Darrell was immensely rich, and that Matilda was his only surviving child, did not fail to find himself in the Green Park again—and again—and again!

Arabella, of course, felt how wrong it was to allow him to accost her, and walk by one side of her while Miss Darrell was on the other. But she felt, also, as if it would be much more wrong to slip out and meet him alone. Not for worlds would she again have placed herself in such peril. To refuse to meet him at all?—she had not strength enough for *that!* Her joy at seeing him was so immense. And nothing could be more respectful than Jasper's manner and conversation. Whatever of warmer and more impassioned sentiment was exchanged between them passed in notes. Jasper had suggested to Arabella to represent him to Matilda as some near relation. But Arabella refused all such disguise. Her sole claim to self-respect was in considering him solemnly engaged to her—the man she

* *Mel Ynnys*—Isle of Honey. One of the poetic names given to England in the language of the ancient Britons.

was to marry. And, after the second time they thus met, she said to Matilda, who had not questioned her by a word—by a look—"I was to be married to that gentleman before my father died; we are to be married as soon as we have something to live upon."

Matilda made some commonplace but kindly rejoinder. And thus she became raised into Arabella's confidence,—so far as that confidence could be given, without betraying Jasper's real name, or one darker memory in herself. Luxury, indeed, it was to Arabella to find, at last, some one to whom she could speak of that betrothal in which her whole future was invested—of that affection which was her heart's sheet-anchor—of that home, humble it might be, and far off, but to which Time rarely fails to bring the Two, if never weary of the trust to become as One. Talking thus, Arabella forgot the relationship of pupil and teacher; it was as woman to woman—girl to girl—friend to friend. Matilda seemed touched by the confidence—flattered to possess at last another's secret. Arabella was a little chafed that she did not seem to admire Jasper as much as Arabella thought the whole world must admire. Matilda excused herself. "She had scarcely noticed Mr. Hammond. Yes; she had no doubt he would be considered handsome; but she owned, though it might be bad taste, that she preferred a pale complexion, with auburn hair;" and then she sighed and looked away, as if she had, in the course of her secret life, encountered some fatal pale complexion, with never-to-be-forgotten auburn hair. Not a word was said by either Matilda or Arabella as to concealing from Mr. Darrell these meetings with Mr. Hammond. Perhaps Arabella could not stoop to ask that secrecy; but there was no necessity to ask; Matilda was always too rejoiced to have something to conceal.

Now, in these interviews, Jasper scarcely ever addressed himself to Matilda; not twenty spoken words could have passed between them; yet, in the very third interview, Matilda's sly fingers had closed on a sly note. And from that day, in each interview, Arabella walking in the centre, Jasper on one side, Matilda the other—behind Arabella's back—passed the sly fingers and the sly notes, which Matilda received and answered. Not more than twelve or fourteen times was even this interchange effected. Darrell was about to move to Fawley. All such meetings would

be now suspended. Two or three mornings before that fixed for leaving London, Matilda's room was found vacant. She was gone. Arabella was the first to discover her flight, the first to learn its cause. Matilda had left on her writing-table a letter for Miss Fossett. It was very short, very quietly expressed, and it rested her justification on a note from Jasper, which she enclosed—a note in which that gallant hero, ridiculing the idea that he could ever have been in love with Arabella, declared that he would destroy himself if Matilda refused to fly. *She* need not fear such angelic confidence in him. No! Even

"Had he a heart for falsehood framed,
He ne'er could injure her."

Stifling each noisier cry—but panting—gasping—literally half out of her mind, Arabella rushed into Darrell's study. He, unsuspecting man, calmly bending over his dull books, was startled by her apparition. Few minutes sufficed to tell him all that it concerned him to learn. Few brief questions, few passionate answers, brought him to the very worst.

Who, and what, was this Mr. Hammond? Heaven of heavens! the son of William Losely—of a transported felon!

Arabella exulted in a reply which gave her a moment's triumph over the rival who had filched from her such a prize. Roused from his first misery and sense of abasement in this discovery, Darrell's wrath was naturally poured, not on the fugitive child, but on the frontless woman, who, buoyed up by her own rage and sense of wrong, faced him, and did not cower. She, the faithless governess, had presented to her pupil this convict's son in another name; she owned it—she had trepanned into the snares of so vile a fortune-hunter an ignorant child: she might feign amaze—act remorse—she must have been the man's accomplice. Stung, amidst all the bewilderment of her anguish, by this charge, which, at least, she did not deserve, Arabella tore from her bosom Jasper's recent letters to herself—letters all devotion and passion—placed them before Darrell, and bade him read. Nothing thought she then of name and fame—nothing but of her wrongs and of her woes. Compared to herself, Matilda seemed the perfidious criminal—she the injured victim. Darrell but

glanced over the letters; they were signed "your loving husband."

"What is this?" he exclaimed; "are you married to the man?"

"Yes," cried Arabella, "in the eyes of Heaven!"

To Darrell's penetration there was no mistaking the significance of those words and that look; and his wrath redoubled. Anger in him, when once roused, was terrible; he had small need of words to vent it. His eye withered, his gesture appalled. Conscious but of one burning firebrand in brain and heart—of a sense that youth, joy, and hope were for ever gone, that the world could never be the same again—Arabella left the house, her character lost, her talents useless, her very means of existence stopped. Who henceforth would take *her* to teach? Who henceforth place their children under *her* charge?

She shrank into a gloomy lodging—she shut herself up alone with her despair. Strange though it may seem, her anger against Jasper was slight as compared with the intensity of her hate to Matilda. And stranger still it may seem, that as her thoughts recovered from their first chaos, she felt more embittered against the world, more crushed by a sense of shame, and yet galled by a no less keen sense of injustice, in recalling the scorn with which Darrell had rejected all excuse for her conduct in the misery it had occasioned her, than she did by the consciousness of her own lamentable errors. As in Darrell's esteem there was something that, to those who could appreciate it, seemed invaluable, so in his contempt to those who had cherished that esteem, there was a weight of ignominy, as if a judge had pronounced a sentence that outlaws the rest of life.

Arabella had not much left out of her munificent salary. What she had hitherto laid by had passed to Jasper—defraying, perhaps, the very cost of his flight with her treacherous rival. When her money was gone, she pawned the poor relics of her innocent happy girlhood, which she had been permitted to take from her father's home, and had borne with her wherever she went, like household gods,—the prize-books, the lute, the costly work-box, the very bird-cage, all which the reader will remember to have seen in her later life, the books never opened—the lute broken, the bird long, long, long vanished from the cage! Never did she think she should redeem those pledges from that

Golgotha, which takes, rarely to give back, so many hallowed tokens of the Dreamland called "Better Days,"—the trinkets worn at the first ball, the ring that was given with the earliest love-vow—yea, even the very bells and coral that pleased the infant in his dainty cradle, and the very Bible in which the lips that now bargain for sixpence more, read to some grey-haired father on his bed of death!

Soon the sums thus miserably raised were as miserably doled away. With a sullen apathy the woman contemplated famine. She would make no effort to live—appeal to no relations, no friends. It was a kind of vengeance she took on others, to let herself drift on to death. She had retreated from lodging to lodging, each obscurer, more desolate than the other. Now, she could no longer pay rent for the humblest room; now, she was told to go forth—whither? She knew not—cared not—took her way towards the River, as by that instinct which, when the mind is diseased, tends towards self-destruction, scarce less involuntarily than it turns, in health, towards self-preservation. Just as she passed under the lamp-light at the foot of Westminster Bridge, a man looked at her, and seized her arm. She raised her head with a chilly, melancholy scorn, as if she had received an insult—as if she feared that the man knew the stain upon her name, and dreamed, in his folly, that the dread of death might cause her to sin again.

"Do you not know me?" said the man; "more strange that I should recognise you! Dear, dear, and what a dress!—how you *are* altered! Poor thing!"

At the words "poor thing" Arabella burst into tears; and in those tears the heavy cloud on her brain seemed to melt away.

"I have been inquiring, seeking for you everywhere, Miss," resumed the man. "Surely, you know me now! Your poor aunt's lawyer! She is no more—died last week. She has left you all she had in the world; and a very pretty income it is, too, for a single lady."

Thus it was that we find Arabella installed in the dreary comforts of Podden Place. "She exchanged," she said, "in honour to her aunt's memory, her own name for that of Crane, which her aunt had borne—her own mother's maiden name." She assumed, though still so young, that title of "Mrs." which spinsters, grown venerable, moodily

adopt when they desire all mankind to know that henceforth they relinquish the vanities of tender misses—that, become mistress of themselves, they defy and spit upon our worthless sex, which, whatever its repentance, is warned that it repents in vain. Most of her aunt's property was in houses, in various districts of Bloomsbury. Arabella moved from one to the other of these tenements, till she settled for good into the dullest of all. To make it duller yet, by contrast with the past, the Golgotha for once gave up its buried treasures—broken lute, birdless cage!

Somewhere about two years after Matilda's death, Arabella happened to be in the office of the agent who collected her house-rents, when a well-dressed man entered, and, leaning over the counter, said—"There is an advertisement in to-day's *Times* about a lady who offers a home, education, and so forth, to any little motherless girl; terms moderate, as said lady loves children for their own sake. Advertiser refers to your office for particulars—give them!"

The agent turned to his books; and Arabella turned towards the inquirer. "For whose child do you want a home, Jasper Losely?"

Jasper started. "Arabella! Best of creatures! And can you deign to speak to such a vil——"

"Hush—let us walk. Never mind the advertisement of a stranger. I may find a home for a motherless child—a home that will cost you nothing."

She drew him into the street. "But can this be the child of—of—Matilda Darrell?"

"Bella!" replied, in coaxing accents, that most execrable of lady-killers, "can I trust you?—can you be my friend in spite of my having been such a very sad dog? But money—what can one do without money in this world? 'Had I a heart for falsehood framed, it would ne'er have injured you'—if I had not been so cursedly hard up! And indeed, now, if you would but condescend to forgive and forget, perhaps some day or other we may be Darby and Joan—only, you see, just at this moment I am really not worthy of such a Joan. You know, of course, that I am a widower—not inconsolable."

"Yes; I read of Mrs. Hammond's death in an old newspaper."

"And you did not read of her baby's death, too—some weeks afterwards?"

"No; it is seldom that I see a newspaper. Is the infant dead?"

"Hum—you shall hear." And Jasper entered into a recital, to which Arabella listened with attentive interest. At the close she offered to take, herself, the child for whom Jasper sought a home. She informed him of her change of name and address. The wretch promised to call that evening with the infant; but he sent the infant, and did not call. Nor did he present himself again to her eyes, until, several years afterwards, those eyes so luridly welcomed him to Podden Place. But though he did not even condescend to write to her in the meanwhile, it is probable that Arabella contrived to learn more of his habits and mode of life at Paris than she intimated when they once more met face to face.

And now the reader knows more than Alban Morley, or Guy Darrell perhaps ever will know, of the grim woman in iron-grey.

CHAPTER X.

"Sweet are the uses of Adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Bears yet a precious jewel in its head."

Most persons will agree that the toad is ugly and venomous, but few indeed are the persons who can boast of having actually discovered that "precious jewel in its head," which the poet assures us is placed there. But Calamity may be classed in two great divisions—1st, the afflictions, which no prudence can avert; 2nd, The misfortunes, which men take all possible pains to bring upon themselves. Afflictions of the first class may but call forth our virtues, and result in our ultimate good. Such is the adversity which may give us the jewel. But to get at the jewel we must kill the toad. Misfortunes of the second class but too often increase the errors or the vices by which they were created. Such is the adversity which is all toad and no jewel. If you choose to breed and fatten your own toads, the increase of the venom absorbs every bit of the jewel.

Never did I know a man who was an habitual gambler, otherwise than notably inaccurate in his calculations of probabilities in the ordinary affairs of life. Is it that such a man has become so chronic a drunkard of hope, that he sees double every chance in his favour?

Jasper Losely had counted upon two things as matters of course.

1*st*. Darrell's speedy reconciliation with his only child.

2*d*. That Darrell's only child must of necessity be Darrell's heiress.

In both these expectations the gambler was deceived.

Darrell did not even answer the letters that Matilda addressed to him from France, to the shores of which Jasper had borne her, and where he had hastened to make her his wife under the assumed name of Hammond, but his true Christian name of Jasper.

In the disreputable marriage Matilda had made, all the worst parts of her character seemed suddenly revealed to her father's eye, and he saw what he had hitherto sought not to see, the true child of a worthless mother. A mere *mésalliance*, if palliated by long or familiar acquaintance with the object, however it might have galled him, his heart might have pardoned; but here, without even a struggle of duty, without the ordinary coyness of maiden pride, to be won with so scanty a wooing, by a man who she knew was betrothed to another—the dissimulation, the perfidy, the combined effrontery and meanness of the whole transaction, left no force in Darrell's eyes to the common-place excuses of inexperience and youth. Darrell would not have been Darrell if he could have taken back to his home or his heart a daughter so old in deceit, so experienced in thoughts that dishonour.

Darrell's silence, however, little saddened the heartless bride, and little dismayed the sanguine bridegroom. Both thought that pardon and plenty were but the affair of time—a little more or little less. But their funds rapidly diminished; it became necessary to recruit them. One can't live in hotels entirely upon hope. Leaving his bride for a while in a pleasant provincial town, not many hours distant from Paris, Jasper returned to London, intent upon seeing Darrell himself; and, should the father-in-law still defer articles of peace, Jasper believed that he could have no trouble in raising a present supply upon such an El Dorado of future expectations. Darrell at once consented to see Jasper, not at his own house, but at his solicitor's. Smothering all opposing disgust, the proud gentleman deemed this condescension essential to the clear and definite understanding of those resolves upon which depended the worldly station and prospects of the wedded pair.

When Jasper was shown into Mr. Gotobed's office,

Darrell was alone, standing near the hearth, and by a single quiet gesture repelled that tender rush towards his breast which Jasper had elaborately prepared; and thus for the first time the two men saw each other, Darrell perhaps yet more resentfully mortified while recognising those personal advantages in the showy profligate which had rendered a daughter of his house so facile a conquest: Jasper (who had chosen to believe that a father-in-law so eminent must necessarily be old and broken) shocked into the most disagreeable surprise by the sight of a man still young, under forty, with a countenance, a port, a presence, that in any assemblage would have attracted the general gaze from his own brilliant self, and looking altogether as unfavourable an object, whether for pathos or for post-obits, as unlikely to breathe out a blessing or to give up the ghost, as the worst brute of a father-in-law could possibly be. Nor were Darrell's words more comforting than his aspect.

"Sir, I have consented to see you, partly that you may learn from my own lips once for all that I admit no man's right to enter my family without my consent, and that consent you will never receive; and partly that, thus knowing each other by sight, each may know the man it becomes him most to avoid. The lady who is now your wife is entitled by my marriage-settlement to the reversion of a small fortune at my death; nothing more from me is she likely to inherit. As I have no desire that she to whom I once gave the name of daughter should be dependent wholly on yourself for bread, my solicitor will inform you on what conditions I am willing, during my life, to pay the interest of the sum which will pass to your wife at my death. Sir, I return to your hands the letters that lady has addressed to me, and which, it is easy to perceive, were written at your dictation. No letter from her will I answer. Across my threshold her foot will never pass. Thus, sir, concludes all possible intercourse between you and myself; what rests is between you and that gentleman."

Darrell had opened a side-door in speaking the last words —pointed towards the respectable form of Mr. Gotobed standing tall beside his tall desk—and, before Jasper could put in a word, the father-in-law was gone.

With becoming brevity, Mr. Gotobed made Jasper fully

aware that not only all Mr. Darrell's funded or personal property was entirely at his own disposal—that not only the large landed estates he had purchased (and which Jasper had vaguely deemed inherited and in strict entail) were in the same condition—condition enviable to the proprietor, odious to the bridegroom of the proprietor's sole daughter; but that even the fee-simple of the poor Fawley Manor-House and lands was vested in Darrell, encumbered only by the portion of £10,000 which the late Mrs. Darrell had brought to her husband, and which was settled, at the death of herself and Darrell, on the children of the marriage.

In the absence of marriage-settlements between Jasper and Matilda, that sum at Darrell's death was liable to be claimed by Jasper, in right of his wife, so as to leave no certainty that provision would remain for the support of his wife and family; and the contingent reversion might, in the mean time, be so dealt with as to bring eventual poverty on them all.

"Sir," said the lawyer, "I will be quite frank with you. It is my wish, acting for Mr. Darrell, so to settle this sum of £10,000 on your wife, and any children she may bear you, as to place it out of your power to anticipate or dispose of it, even with Mrs. Hammond's consent. If you part with that power, not at present a valuable one, you are entitled to compensation. I am prepared to make that compensation liberal. Perhaps you would prefer communicating with me through your own solicitor. But I should tell you, that the terms are more likely to be advantageous to you, in proportion as negotiation is confined to us two. It might, for instance, be expedient to tell your solicitor that your true name (I beg you a thousand pardons) is not Hammond. That is a secret which, the more you can keep it to yourself, the better I think it will be for you. We have no wish to blab it out."

Jasper, by this time, had somewhat recovered the first shock of displeasure and disappointment; and with that quickness which so erratically darted through a mind that contrived to be dull when anything honest was addressed to its apprehension, he instantly divined that his real name of Losely was worth something. He had no idea of resuming—was, indeed, at that time anxious altogether to ignore and eschew it; but he had a right to it, and a man's

rights are not to be resigned for nothing. Accordingly, he said with some asperity, "I shall resume my family name whenever I choose it. If Mr. Darrell does not like his daughter to be called Mrs. Jasper Losely—or all the malignant tittle-tattle which my poor father's unfortunate trial might provoke—he must, at least, ask me as a favour to retain the name I have temporarily adopted—a name in my family, sir. A Losely married a Hammond, I forget when—generations ago—you'll see it in the Baronetage. My grandfather, Sir Julian, was not a crack lawyer, but he was a baronet of as good birth as any in the country; and my father, sir"—(Jasper's voice trembled)—"my father," he repeated, fiercely striking his clenched hand on the table, "was a gentleman every inch of his body; and I'll pitch any man out of the window who says a word to the contrary!"

"Sir," said Mr. Gotobed, shrinking towards the bell-pull, "I think, on the whole, I had better see your solicitor."

Jasper cooled down at that suggestion; and, with a slight apology for natural excitement, begged to know what Mr. Gotobed wished to propose. To make an end of this part of the story, after two or three interviews, in which the two negotiators learned to understand each other, a settlement was legally completed, by which the sum of £10,000 was inalienably settled on Matilda, and her children by her marriage with Jasper; in case he survived her, the interest was to be his for life—in case she died childless, the capital would devolve to himself at Darrell's decease. Meanwhile, Darrell agreed to pay £500 a year, as the interest of the £10,000 at five per cent., to Jasper Hammond, or his order, provided always that Jasper and his wife continued to reside together, and fixed that residence abroad.

By a private verbal arrangement, not even committed to writing, to this sum was added another £200 a year, wholly at Darrell's option and discretion. It being clearly comprehended that these words meant so long as Mr. Hammond kept his own secret, and so long, too, as he forbore, directly or indirectly, to molest or even to address, the person at whose pleasure it was held. On the whole, the conditions to Jasper were sufficiently favourable: he came into an income immeasurably beyond his right to believe that he should ever enjoy; and sufficient—well managed—for even

a fair share of the elegancies as well as comforts of life, to a young couple blest in each other's love, and remote from the horrible taxes and emulous gentilities of this opulent England, where out of fear to be thought too poor, nobody is ever too rich.

Matilda wrote no more to Darrell. But some months afterwards he received an extremely well-expressed note in French, the writer whereof represented herself as a French lady, who had very lately seen Madame Hammond—who was now in London but for a few days, and had something to communicate, of such importance as to justify the liberty she took in requesting him to honour her with a visit. After some little hesitation, Darrell called on this lady. Though Matilda had forfeited his affection, he could not contemplate her probable fate without painful anxiety. Perhaps Jasper had ill-used her—perhaps she had need of shelter elsewhere. Though that shelter could not again be under a father's roof—and though Darrell would have taken no steps to separate her from the husband she had chosen, still, in secret, he would have felt comparative relief and ease had she herself sought to divide her fate from one whose path downwards in dishonour his penetration instinctively divined. With an idea that some communication might be made to him, to which he might reply that Matilda, if compelled to quit her husband, should never want the home and subsistence of a gentlewoman, he repaired to the house (a handsome house in a quiet street) temporarily occupied by the French lady. A tall *chasseur*, in full costume, opened the door—a page ushered him into the drawing-room. He saw a lady—young—and with all the grace of a *Parisienne* in her manner—who, after some exquisitely-turned phrases of excuse, showed him (as a testimonial of the intimacy between herself and Madame Hammond) a letter she had received from Matilda, in a very heart-broken, filial strain, full of professions of penitence—of a passionate desire for her father's forgiveness—but far from complaining of Jasper, or hinting at the idea of deserting a spouse, with whom, but for the haunting remembrance of a beloved parent, her lot would be blest indeed. Whatever of pathos was deficient in the letter, the French lady supplied by such apparent fine feeling, and by so many touching little traits of Matilda's remorse, that Darrell's heart was softened in spite of his reason. He

went away, however, saying very little, and intending to call no more. But another note came. The French lady had received a letter from a mutual friend—"Matilda," she feared, "was dangerously ill." This took him again to the house, and the poor French lady seemed so agitated by the news she had heard—and yet so desirous not to exaggerate nor alarm him needlessly, that Darrell suspected his daughter was really dying, and became nervously anxious himself for the next report. Thus, about three or four visits in all necessarily followed the first one. Then Darrell abruptly closed the intercourse, and could not be induced to call again. Not that he for an instant suspected that this amiable lady, who spoke so becomingly, and whose manners were so high-bred, was other than the well-born Baroness she called herself, and looked to be, but partly because, in the last interview, the charming *Parisienne* had appeared a little to forget Matilda's alarming illness, in a not forward but still coquettish desire to centre his attention more upon herself; and the moment she did so, he took a dislike to her which he had not before conceived; and partly because his feelings having recovered the first effect which the vision of a penitent, pining, dying daughter could not fail to produce, his experience of Matilda's duplicity and falsehood made him discredit the penitence, the pining, and the dying. The Baroness might not wilfully be deceiving him—Matilda might be wilfully deceiving the Baroness. To the next note, therefore, despatched to him by the feeling and elegant foreigner, he replied but by a dry excuse—a stately hint, that family matters could never be satisfactorily discussed except in family councils, and that if her friend's grief or illness were really in any way occasioned by a belief in the pain her choice of life might have inflicted on himself, it might comfort her to know that that pain had subsided, and that his wish for her health and happiness was not less sincere, because henceforth he could neither watch over the one nor administer to the other. To this note, after a day or two, the Baroness replied by a letter so beautifully worded, I doubt whether Madame de Sevigné could have written in purer French, or Madame de Staël with a finer felicity of phrase. Stripped of the graces of diction, the substance was but small: "Anxiety for a friend so beloved—so unhappy—more pitied even than before, now that the Baroness had

been enabled to see how fondly a daughter must idolise a father in the Man whom a nation revered!—(here two lines devoted to compliment personal)—compelled by that anxiety to quit even sooner than she had first intended the metropolis of that noble Country," &c.—(here four lines devoted to compliment national)—and then proceeding through some charming sentences about patriot altars and domestic hearths, the writer suddenly checked herself—"would intrude no more on time sublimely dedicated to the Human Race—and concluded with the assurance of sentiments the most *distinguées*." Little thought Darrell that this complimentary stranger, whom he never again beheld, would exercise an influence over that portion of his destiny which then seemed to him most secure from evil; towards which, then, he looked for the balm to every wound—the compensation to every loss!

Darrell heard no more of Matilda, till, not long afterwards, her death was announced to him. She had died from exhaustion shortly after giving birth to a female child. The news came upon him at a moment when, from other causes—(the explanation of which, forming no part of his confidence to Alban, it will be convenient to reserve)—his mind was in a state of great affliction and disorder—when he had already buried himself in the solitudes of Fawley—ambition resigned and the world renounced—and the intelligence saddened and shocked him more than it might have done some months before. If, at that moment of utter bereavement, Matilda's child had been brought to him—given up to him to rear—would he have rejected it? would he have forgotten that it was a felon's grandchild? I dare not say. But his pride was not put to such a trial. One day he received a packet from Mr. Gotobed, enclosing the formal certificates of the infant's death, which had been presented to him by Jasper, who had arrived in London for that melancholy purpose, with which he combined a pecuniary proposition. By the death of Matilda and her only child, the sum of £10,000 absolutely reverted to Jasper in the event of Darrell's decease. As the interest meanwhile was continued to Jasper, that widowed mourner suggested "that it would be a great boon to himself and no disadvantage to Darrell if the principal were made over to him at once. He had been brought up originally to commerce. He had abjured all thoughts of resuming such

vocation during his wife's lifetime, out of that consideration for her family and ancient birth which motives of delicacy imposed. Now that the connection with Mr. Darrell was dissolved, it might be rather a relief than otherwise to that gentleman to know that a son-in-law so displeasing to him was finally settled, not only in a foreign land, but in a social sphere in which his very existence would soon be ignored by all who could remind Mr. Darrell that his daughter had once a husband. An occasion that might never occur again now presented itself. A trading firm at Paris, opulent, but unostentatiously quiet in its mercantile transactions, would accept him as a partner could he bring to it the additional capital of £10,000." Not without dignity did Jasper add, "that since his connection had been so unhappily distasteful to Mr. Darrell, and since the very payment, each quarter, of the interest on the sum in question must in itself keep alive the unwelcome remembrance of that connection, he had the less scruple in making a proposition which would enable the eminent personage who so disdained his alliance to get rid of him altogether." Darrell closed at once with Jasper's proposal, pleased to cut off from his life each tie that could henceforth link it to Jasper's, nor displeased to relieve his hereditary acres from every shilling of the marriage portion which was imposed on it as a debt, and associated with memories of unmingled bitterness. Accordingly, Mr. Gotobed, taking care first to ascertain that the certificates as to the poor child's death were genuine, accepted Jasper's final release of all claim on Mr. Darrell's estate. There still, however, remained the £200 a-year which Jasper had received during Matilda's life, on the tacit condition of remaining Mr. Hammond, and not personally addressing Mr. Darrell. Jasper inquired "if that annuity was to continue?" Mr. Gotobed referred the inquiry to Darrell, observing that the object for which this extra allowance had been made, was rendered nugatory by the death of Mrs. Hammond and her child; since Jasper henceforth could have neither power nor pretext to molest Mr. Darrell, and that it could signify but little what name might in future be borne by one whose connection with the Darrell family was wholly dissolved. Darrell impatiently replied, "That nothing having been said as to the withdrawal of the said allowance in case Jasper became a widower, he

remained equally entitled, in point of honour, to receive that allowance, or an adequate equivalent."

This answer being intimated to Jasper, that gentleman observed "that it was no more than he had expected from Mr. Darrell's sense of honour," and apparently quite satisfied, carried himself and his £10,000 back to Paris. Not long after, however, he wrote to Mr. Gotobed that "Mr. Darrell having alluded to an equivalent for the £200 a-year allowed to him, evidently implying that it was as disagreeable to Mr. Darrell to see that sum entered quarterly in his banker's books, as it had been to see there the quarterly interest of the £10,000, so Jasper might be excused in owning that he should prefer an equivalent. The commercial firm to which he was about to attach himself required a somewhat larger capital on his part than he had anticipated, &c. &c. Without presuming to dictate any definite sum, he would observe that £1,500 or even £1,000 would be of more avail to his views and objects in life than an annuity of £200 a-year, which, being held only at will, was not susceptible of a temporary loan." Darrell, wrapped in thoughts wholly remote from recollections of Jasper, chafed at being thus recalled to the sense of that person's existence, wrote back to the solicitor who transmitted to him this message, "that an annuity held on his word was not to be calculated by Mr. Hammond's notions of its value. That the £200 a-year should therefore be placed on the same footing as the £500 a-year that had been allowed on a capital of £10,000; that accordingly it might be held to represent a principal of £4000, for which he enclosed a cheque, begging Mr. Gotobed not only to make Mr. Hammond fully understand that there ended all possible accounts or communication between them, but never again to trouble him with any matters whatsoever in reference to affairs that were thus finally concluded." Jasper, receiving the £4,000, left Darrell and Gotobed in peace till the following year. He then addressed to Gotobed an exceedingly plausible, business-like letter. "The firm he had entered, in the silk trade, was in the most flourishing state—an opportunity occurred to purchase a magnificent mulberry plantation in Provence, with all requisite *magnanneries*, &c., which would yield an immense increase of profit. That if, to insure him a share in this lucrative purchase, Mr. Darrell could accommodate him

for a year with a loan of £2,000 or £3,000, he sanguinely calculated on attaining so high a position in the commercial world, as, though it could not render the recollection of his alliance more obtrusive to Mr. Darrell, would render it less humiliating."

Mr. Gotobed, in obedience to the peremptory instructions he had received from his client, did not refer this letter to Darrell, but having occasion at that time to visit Paris on other business, he resolved (without calling on Mr. Hammond) to institute there some private inquiry into that rising trader's prospects and status. He found, on arrival at Paris, these inquiries difficult. No one in either the *beau monde* or in the *haut commerce* seemed to know anything about this Mr. Jasper Hammond. A few fashionable English *roués* remembered to have seen, once or twice during Matilda's life, and shortly after her decease, a very fine-looking man shooting meteoric across some equivocal *salons*, or lounging in the *Champs Elysées*, or dining at the *Café de Paris;* but of late that meteor had vanished. Mr. Gotobed, then cautiously employing a commissioner to gain some information of Mr. Hammond's firm at the private residence from which Jasper addressed his letter, ascertained that in that private residence Jasper did not reside. He paid the porter to receive occasional letters, for which he called or sent; and the porter, who was evidently a faithful and discreet functionary, declared his belief that Monsieur Hammond lodged in the house in which he transacted business, though where was the house or what was the business, the porter observed, with well-bred implied rebuke, "Monsieur Hammond was too reserved to communicate, he himself too incurious to inquire." At length, Mr. Gotobed's business, which was, in fact, a commission from a distressed father to extricate an imprudent son, a mere boy, from some unhappy associations, having brought him into the necessity of seeing persons who belonged neither to the *beau monde* nor to the *haut commerce*, he gleaned from them the information he desired. Mr. Hammond lived in the very heart of a certain circle in Paris, which but few Englishmen ever penetrate. In that circle Mr. Hammond had, on receiving his late wife's dowry, become the partner in a private gambling hell; in that hell had been engulfed all the monies he had received—a hell that ought to have prospered with him, if he could

have economised his villanous gains. His senior partner in that firm retired into the country with a fine fortune—no doubt the very owner of those mulberry plantations which were now on sale! But Jasper scattered napoleons faster than any *croupier* could rake them away. And Jasper's natural talent for converting solid gold into thin air had been assisted by a lady, who, in the course of her amiable life, had assisted many richer men than Jasper to lodgings in *St. Pelagie*, or cells in the *Maison des Fous*. With that lady he had become acquainted during the lifetime of his wife, and it was supposed that Matilda's discovery of this *liaison* had contributed perhaps to the illness which closed in her decease; the name of that lady was Gabrielle Desmarets. *She* might still be seen daily at the Bois de Boulogne, nightly at opera-house or theatre; *she* had apartments in the Chaussée d'Antin far from inaccessible to Mr. Gotobed, if he coveted the honour of her acquaintance. But Jasper was less before an admiring world. He was supposed now to be connected with another gambling-house of lower grade than the last, in which he had contrived to break his own bank and plunder his own till. It was supposed also that he remained good friends with Mademoiselle Desmarets; but if he visited her at her house, he was never to be seen there. In fact, his temper was so uncertain, his courage so dauntless, his strength so prodigious, that gentlemen who did not wish to be thrown out of a window, or hurled down a staircase, shunned any salon or boudoir in which they had a chance to encounter him. Mademoiselle Desmarets had thus been condemned to the painful choice between his society and that of nobody else, or that of anybody else with the rigid privation of his. Not being a turtle-dove, she had chosen the latter alternative. It was believed, nevertheless, that if Gabrielle Desmarets had known the weakness of a kind sentiment, it was for this turbulent lady-killer; and that, with a liberality she had never exhibited in any other instance, when she could no longer help him to squander, she would still, at a pinch, help him to live; though, of course, in such a reverse of the normal laws of her being, Mademoiselle Desmarets set those bounds on her own generosity which she would not have imposed upon his, and had said with a sigh, "I could forgive him if he beat me and beggared my friends! but to beat my friends and to beggar me,—

that is not the kind of love which makes the world go round!"

Scandalised to the last nerve of his respectable system by the information thus gleaned, Mr. Gotobed returned to London. More letters from Jasper—becoming urgent, and at last even insolent—Mr. Gotobed worried into a reply, wrote back shortly, "that he could not even communicate such applications to Mr. Darrell, and that he must peremptorily decline all further intercourse, epistolary or personal, with Mr. Hammond."

Darrell, on returning from one of the occasional rambles on the Continent, "remote, unfriended, melancholy," by which he broke the monotony of his Fawley life, found a letter from Jasper, not fawning, but abrupt, addressed to himself, complaining of Mr. Gotobed's improper tone, requesting pecuniary assistance, and intimating that he could in return communicate to Mr. Darrell an intelligence that would give him more joy than all his wealth could purchase. Darrell enclosed that note to Mr. Gotobed; Mr. Gotobed came down to Fawley to make those revelations of Jasper's mode of life which were too delicate—or too much the reverse of delicate—to commit to paper. Great as Darrell's disgust at the memory of Jasper had hitherto been, it may well be conceived how much more bitter became that memory now. No answer was, of course, vouchsafed to Jasper, who, after another extremely forcible appeal for money, and equally enigmatical boast of the pleasurable information it was in his power to bestow, relapsed into sullen silence.

One day, somewhat more than five years after Matilda's death, Darrell, coming in from his musing walks, found a stranger waiting for him. This stranger was William Losely, returned from penal exile; and while Darrell, on hearing this announcement, stood mute with haughty wonder that such a visitor could cross the threshold of his father's house, the convict began what seemed to Darrel a story equally audacious and incomprehensible—the infant Matilda had borne to Jasper, and the certificates of whose death had been so ceremoniously produced and so prudently attested, lived still! Sent out to nurse as soon as born, the nurse had in her charge another babe, and this last was the child who had died and been buried as Matilda Hammond's. The elder Losely went on to stammer out a

hope that his son was not at the time aware of the fraudulent exchange, but had been deceived by the nurse—that it had not been a premeditated imposture of his own to obtain his wife's fortune.

When Darrel came to this part of his story, Alban Morley's face grew more seriously interested. "Stop!" he said; "William Losely assured you of his own conviction that this strange tale was true. What proofs did he volunteer?"

"Proofs! Death, man, do you think that at such moments I was but a bloodless lawyer, to question and cross-examine? I could but bid the impostor leave the house which his feet polluted."

Alban heaved a sigh, and murmured, too low for Darrell to overhear, "Poor Willy!" then aloud, "But, my dear friend, bear with me one moment. Suppose that, by the arts of this diabolical Jasper, the exchange really had been effected, and a child to your ancient line lived still, would it not be a solace, a comfort—"

"Comfort!" cried Darrell, "comfort in the perpetuation of infamy! The line I promised my father to restore to its rank in the land, to be renewed in the grandchild of a felon!—in the child of the yet viler sharper of a hell!—You, gentleman and soldier, call that thought—'comfort!' O Alban!—out on you! Fie! fie! No!—leave such a thought to the lips of a William Losely! He indeed, clasping his hands, faltered forth some such word; he seemed to count on my forlorn privation of kith and kindred—no heir to my wealth—no representative of my race—would I deprive myself of—ay—your very words—of a solace—a comfort! He asked me, at least, to inquire."

"And you answered?"

"Answered so as to quell and crush in the bud all hopes in the success of so flagrant a falsehood—answered 'Why inquire? Know that, even if your tale were true, I have no heir, no representative, no descendant in the child of Jasper—the grandchild of William—Losely. I can at least leave my wealth to the son of Charles Haughton. True, Charles Haughton was a spendthrift, a gamester; but he was neither a professional cheat nor a convicted felon.'"

"You said that—O Darrell!"

The Colonel checked himself. But for Charles Haugh-

ton, the spendthrift and gamester, would William Losely have been the convicted felon? He checked that thought, and hurried on—"And how did William Losely reply?"

"He made no reply—he skulked away without a word."

Darrell then proceeded to relate the interview which Jasper had forced on him at Fawley during Lionel's visit there—on Jasper's part an attempt to tell the same tale as William had told—on Darrell's part, the same scornful refusal to hear it out. "And," added Darrell, "the man, finding it thus impossible to dupe my reason, had the inconceivable meanness to apply to me for alms. I could not better show the disdain in which I held himself and his story than in recognising his plea as a mendicant. I threw my purse at his feet, and so left him."

"But," continued Darrell, his brow growing darker and darker—"but wild and monstrous as the story was, still the idea that it MIGHT be true—a supposition which derived its sole strength from the character of Jasper Losely—from the interest he had in the supposed death of a child that alone stood between himself and the money he longed to grasp—an interest which ceased when the money itself was gone, or rather changed into the counter-interest of proving a life that, he thought, would re-establish a hold on me—still, I say, an idea that the story *might* be true, would force itself on my fears, and if so, though my resolution never to acknowledge the child of Jasper Losely as a representative, or even as a daughter, of my house, would of course be immovable—yet it would become my duty to see that her infancy was sheltered, her childhood reared, her youth guarded, her existence amply provided for."

"Right—your plain duty," said Alban bluntly. "Intricate sometimes are the obligations imposed on us as gentlemen; '*noblesse oblige*' is a motto which involves puzzles for a casuist; but our duties as men are plain—the idea very properly haunted you—and—"

"And I hastened to exorcise the spectre. I left England—I went to the French town in which poor Matilda died—I could not, of course, make formal or avowed inquiries of a nature to raise into importance the very conspiracy (if conspiracy there were) which threatened me. But I saw the physician who had attended both my daughter and her child—I sought those who had seen them both

when living—seen them both when dead. The doubt on my mind was dispelled—not a pretext left for my own self-torment. The only person needful in evidence whom I failed to see was the nurse to whom the infant had been sent. She lived in a village some miles from the town—I called at her house—she was out. I left word I should call the next day—I did so—she had absconded. I might, doubtless, have traced her, but to what end if she were merely Jasper's minion and tool? Did not her very flight prove her guilt and her terror? Indirectly I inquired into her antecedents and character. The inquiry opened a field of conjecture, from which I hastened to turn my eyes. This woman had a sister who had been in the service of Gabrielle Desmarets, and Gabrielle Desmarets had been in the neighbourhood during my poor daughter's life-time, and just after my daughter's death. And the nurse had had two infants under her charge; the nurse had removed with one of them to Paris—and Gabrielle Desmarets lived in Paris—and, O Alban, if there be really in flesh and life a child by Jasper Losely to be forced upon my purse or my pity—is it his child, not by the ill-fated Matilda, but by the vile woman for whom Matilda, even in the first year of wedlock, was deserted? Conceive how credulity itself would shrink appalled from the horrible snare!—I to acknowledge, adopt, proclaim as the last of the Darrells, the adulterous offspring of a Jasper Losely and a Gabrielle Desmarets!—or, when I am in my grave, some claim advanced upon the sum settled by my marriage articles on Matilda's issue, and which, if a child survived, could not have been legally transferred to its father—a claim with witnesses suborned—a claim that might be fraudulently established—a claim that would leave the representative - not indeed of my lands and wealth, but, more precious far, of my lineage and blood—in—in the person of—of—"

Darrell paused, almost stifling, and became so pale that Alban started from his seat in alarm.

"It is nothing," resumed Darrell, faintly, "and ill or well, I must finish this subject now, so that we need not re-open it."

"I remained abroad, as you know, for some years. During that time two or three letters from Jasper Losely were forwarded to me; the latest in date more insolent

than all preceding ones. It contained demands as if they were rights, and insinuated threats of public exposure, reflecting on myself and my pride—'He was my son-in-law after all, and if he came to disgrace, the world should know the tie.' Enough. This is all I knew until the man who now, it seems, thrusts himself forward as Jasper Losely's friend or agent, spoke to me the other night at Mrs. Haughton's. That man you have seen, and you say that he—"

"Represents Jasper's poverty as extreme; his temper unscrupulous and desperate; that he is capable of any amount of scandal or violence. It seems that though at Paris he has (Poole believes) still preserved the name of Hammond, yet that in England he has resumed that of Losely; and seems by Poole's date of the time at which he, Poole, made Jasper's acquaintance, to have done so after his baffled attempt on you at Fawley—whether in so doing he intimated the commencement of hostilities, or whether, as is more likely, the sharper finds it convenient to have one name in one country, and one in another, 'tis useless to inquire; enough that the identity between the Hammond who married poor Matilda, and the Jasper Losely whose father was transported, that unscrupulous rogue has no longer any care to conceal. It is true that the revelation of this identity would now be of slight moment to a man of the world—as thick-skinned as myself, for instance; but to you it would be disagreeable—there is no denying that—and therefore, in short, when Mr. Poole advises a compromise, by which Jasper could be secured from want and yourself from annoyance, I am of the same opinion as Mr. Poole is."

"You are?"

"Certainly. My dear Darrell, if in your secret heart there was something so galling in the thought that the man who had married your daughter, though without your consent, was not merely the commonplace adventurer whom the world supposed, but the son of that poor dear—I mean that rascal who was transported, Jasper, too, himself a cheat and a sharper—if this galled you so, that you have concealed the true facts from myself, your oldest friend, till this day—if it has cost you even now so sharp a pang to divulge the true name of that Mr. Hammond, whom our society never saw, whom even gossip has for-

gotten in connection with yourself—how intolerable would be your suffering to have this man watching for you in the streets, some wretched girl in his hand, and crying out, 'A penny for your son-in-law and your grandchild!' Pardon me—I must be blunt. You can give him to the police—send him to the treadmill. Does that mend the matter? Or, worse still, suppose the man commits some crime that fills all the newspapers with his life and adventures, including, of course, his runaway marriage with the famous Guy Darrell's heiress—no one would blame you, no one respect you less; but do not tell me that you would not be glad to save your daughter's name from being coupled with such a miscreant's at the price of half your fortune."

"Alban," said Darrell, gloomily, "you can say nothing on this score that has not been considered by myself. But the man has so placed the matter, that honour itself forbids me to bargain with him for the price of my name. So long as he threatens, I cannot buy off a threat; so long as he persists in a story by which he would establish a claim on me on behalf of a child whom I have every motive as well as every reason to disown as inheriting my blood—whatever I bestowed on himself would seem like hush-money to suppress that claim."

"Of course—I understand, and entirely agree with you. But if the man retract all threats, confess his imposture in respect to this pretended offspring, and consent to retire for life to a distant colony, upon an annuity that may suffice for his wants, but leave no surplus beyond, to render more glaring his vices, or more effective his powers of evil—if this could be arranged between Mr. Poole and myself, I think that your peace might be permanently secured without the slightest sacrifice of honour. Will you leave the matter in my hands on this assurance—that I will not give this person a farthing except on the conditions I have premised?"

"On these conditions, yes, and most gratefully," said Darrell. "Do what you will; but one favour more: never again speak to me (unless absolutely compelled) in reference to this dark portion of my inner life."

Alban pressed his friend's hand, and both were silent for some moments. Then said the Colonel, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "Darrell, more than ever now do I see that

the new house at Fawley, so long suspended, must be finished. Marry again you must!—you can never banish old remembrances unless you can supplant them by fresh hopes."

"I feel it—I know it," cried Darrell, passionately. "And oh! if one remembrance *could* be wrenched away! But it shall—it shall!"

"Ah!" thought Alban—"the remembrance of his former conjugal life!—a remembrance which might well make the youngest and the boldest Benedict shrink from the hazard of a similar experiment."

In proportion to the delicacy, the earnestness, the depth of a man's nature, will there be a something in his character which no male friend can conceive, and a something in the secrets of his life which no male friend can ever conjecture.

CHAPTER XI.

Our old friend the Pocket-Cannibal evinces unexpected patriotism and philosophical moderation, contented with a steak off his own succulent friend in the airs of his own native sky.

Colonel Morley had a second interview with Mr. Poole. It needed not Alban's knowledge of the world to discover that Poole was no partial friend to Jasper Losely; that, for some reason or other, Poole was no less anxious than the Colonel to get that formidable client, whose cause he so warmly advocated, pensioned and packed off into the region most remote from Great Britain, in which a spirit hitherto so restless might consent to settle. And although Mr. Poole had evidently taken offence at Mr. Darrell's discourteous rebuff of his amiable intentions, yet no grudge against Darrell furnished a motive for conduct equal to his Christian desire that Darrell's peace should be purchased by Losely's perpetual exile. Accordingly, Colonel Morley took leave, with a well-placed confidence in Poole's determination to do all in his power to induce Jasper to listen to reason. The Colonel had hoped to learn something from Poole of the elder Losely's present residence and resources. Poole, as we know, could give him there no information. The Colonel also failed to ascertain any particulars relative to that female pretender on whose behalf

Jasper founded his principal claim to Darrell's aid. And so great was Poole's embarrassment in reply to all questions on that score—Where was the young person? With whom had she lived? What was she like? Could the Colonel see her, and hear her own tale?—that Alban entertained a strong suspicion that no such girl was in existence; that she was a pure fiction and myth; or that, if Jasper were compelled to produce some petticoated fair, she would be an artful baggage hired for the occasion.

Poole waited Jasper's next visit with impatience and sanguine delight. He had not a doubt that the ruffian would cheerfully consent to allow that, on further inquiry, he found he had been deceived in his belief of Sophy's parentage, and that there was nothing in England so peculiarly sacred to his heart, but what he might consent to breathe the freer air of Columbian skies, or even to share the shepherd's harmless life amidst the pastures of auriferous Australia! But, to Poole's ineffable consternation, Jasper declared sullenly that he would not consent to expatriate himself merely for the sake of living.

"I am not so young as I was," said the bravo; "I don't speak of years, but feeling. I have not the same energy; once I had high spirits—they are broken; once I had hope—I have none: I am not up to exertion; I have got into lazy habits. To go into new scenes, form new plans, live in a horrid raw new world, everybody round me bustling and pushing—No! that may suit your thin dapper light Hop-o'-my-thumbs! Look at me! See how I have increased in weight the last five years—all solid bone and muscle. I defy any four draymen to move me an inch if I am not in the mind to it; and to be blown off to the antipodes as if I were the down of a pestilent thistle, I am not in the mind for *that*, Dolly Poole!"

"Hum!" said Poole, trying to smile. "This is funny talk. You always were a funny fellow. But I am quite sure, from Colonel Morley's decided manner, that you can get nothing from Darrell if you choose to remain in England."

"Well, when I have nothing else left, I may go to Darrell myself, and have that matter out with him. At present I am not up to it. Dolly, don't bore!" And the bravo, opening a jaw strong enough for any carnivorous animal, yawned—yawned much as a bored tiger does in the

face of a philosophical student of savage manners in the Zoological Gardens.

"Bore!" said Poole, astounded, and recoiling from that expanded jaw. "But I should have thought no subject could bore you less than the consideration of how you are to live?"

"Why, Dolly, I have learned to be easily contented, and you see at present I live upon you."

"Yes," groaned Poole, "but that can't go on for ever; and, besides, you promised that you would leave me in peace as soon as I had got Darrell to provide for you."

"So I will. Zounds, sir, do you doubt my word? So I will. But I don't call exile 'a provision'—*Basta!* I understand from you that Colonel Morley offers to restore the niggardly £200 a-year Darrell formerly allowed to me, to be paid monthly or weekly, through some agent in Van Diemen's Land, or some such uncomfortable half-way house to Eternity, that was not even in the Atlas when I studied geography at school. But £200 a-year is exactly my income in England, paid weekly too, by your agreeable self, with whom it is a pleasure to talk over old times. Therefore that proposal is out of the question. Tell Colonel Morley, with my compliments, that if he will double the sum, and leave me to spend it where I please, I scorn haggling, and say 'done.' And as to the girl, since I cannot find her (which, on penalty of being threshed to a mummy, you will take care not to let out), I would agree to leave Mr. Darrell free to disown her. But are you such a dolt as not to see that I put the ace of trumps on my adversary's pitiful deuce, if I depose that my own child is not my own child, when all I get for it is what I equally get out of you, with my ace of trumps still in my hands? *Basta!*—I say again *Basta!* It is evidently an object to Darrell to get rid of all fear that Sophy should ever pounce upon him tooth and claw: if he be so convinced that she is not his daughter's child, why make a point of my saying that I told him a fib, when I said she was? Evidently, too, he is afraid of my power to harass and annoy him; or why make it a point that I shall only nibble his cheese in a trap at the world's end, stared at by bushmen, and wombats, and rattlesnakes, and alligators, and other American citizens or British settlers! £200 a-year, and my wife's father a

millionaire! The offer is an insult. Ponder this: put on the screw; make them come to terms which I can do them the honour to accept; meanwhile, I will trouble you for my four sovereigns."

Poole had the chagrin to report to the Colonel, Jasper's refusal of the terms proposed, and to state the counter-proposition he was commissioned to make. Alban was at first surprised, not conjecturing the means of supply, in his native land, which Jasper had secured in the coffers of Poole himself. On sounding the unhappy negotiator as to Jasper's reasons, he surmised, however, one part of the truth—viz. that Jasper built hopes of better terms precisely on the fact that terms had been offered to him at all; and this induced Alban almost to regret that he had made any such overtures, and to believe that Darrell's repugnance to open the door of conciliation a single inch to so sturdy a mendicant, was more worldly-wise than Alban had originally supposed. Yet partly, even for Darrell's own security and peace, from that persuasion of his own powers of management which a consummate man of the world is apt to entertain, and partly from a strong curiosity to see the audacious son of that poor dear rascal Willy, and examine himself into the facts he asserted, and the objects he aimed at, Alban bade Poole inform Jasper that Colonel Morley would be quite willing to convince him, in a personal interview, of the impossibility of acceding to the propositions Jasper had made; and that he should be still more willing to see the young person whom Jasper asserted to be the child of his marriage.

Jasper, after a moment's moody deliberation, declined to meet Colonel Morley, actuated to some extent in that refusal by the sensitive vanity which once had given him delight, and now only gave him pain. Meet thus—altered, fallen, imbruted—the fine gentleman whose calm eye had quelled him in the widow's drawing-room in his day of comparative splendour—that in itself was distasteful to the degenerated bravo. But he felt as if he should be at more disadvantage in point of argument with a cool and wary representative of Darrell's interests, than he should be even with Darrell himself. And unable to produce the child whom he arrogated the right to obtrude, he should be but exposed to a fire of cross questions without a shot in his own locker. Accordingly he declined, point-blank, to see

Colonel Morley; and declared that the terms he himself had proposed were the lowest he would accept. "Tell Colonel Morley, however, that if negotiations fail, *I* shall not fail, sooner or later, to argue my view of the points in dispute with my kind father-in-law, and in person."

"Yes, hang it!" cried Poole, exasperated; "go and see Darrell yourself. He is easily found."

"Ay," answered Jasper, with the hardest look of his downcast sidelong eye—"Ay; some day or other it may come to that. I would rather not, if possible. I might not keep my temper. It is not merely a matter of money between us, if we two meet. There are affronts to efface. Banished his house like a mangy dog—treated by a jack-anapes lawyer like the dirt in the kennel! The Loselys, I suspect, would have looked down on the Darrells fifty years ago; and what if my father was born out of wedlock, is the blood not the same? Does the breed dwindle down for want of a gold ring and priest? Look at me. No; not what I now am; not even as you saw me five years ago; but as I leapt into youth! Was I born to cast sums and nib pens as a City clerk? Aha, my poor father, you were wrong there! Blood will out! Mad devil, indeed, is a racer in a citizen's gig! Spavined, and wind-galled, and foundered—let the brute go at last to the knackers; but by his eye, and his pluck, and his bone, the brute shows the stock that he came from!"

Dolly opened his eyes and—blinked. Never in his gaudy days had Jasper half so openly revealed what, perhaps, had been always a sore in his pride; and his outburst now may possibly aid the reader to a subtler comprehension of the arrogance, and levity, and egotism, which accompanied his insensibility to honour, and had converted his very claim to the blood of a gentleman into an excuse for a cynic's disdain of the very virtues for which a gentleman is most desirous of obtaining credit. But by a very ordinary process in the human mind, as Jasper had fallen lower and lower into the lees and dregs of fortune, his pride had more prominently emerged from the group of the other and gaudier vices, by which, in health and high spirits, it had been pushed aside and outshone.

"Humph!" said Poole, after a pause. "If Darrell was as uncivil to you as he was to me, I don't wonder that you owe him a grudge. But even if you do lose temper in

seeing him, it might rather do good than not. You can make yourself cursedly unpleasant if you choose it; and perhaps you will have a better chance of getting your own terms if they see you can bite as well as bark! Set at Darrell, and worry him; it is not fair to worry nobody but me!"

"Dolly, don't bluster! If I could stand at his door, or stop him in the streets, with the girl in my hand, your advice would be judicious. The world would not care for a row between a rich man and a penniless son-in-law. But an interesting young lady, who calls him grandfather, and falls at his knees,—he could not send *her* to hard labour; and if he does not believe in her birth, let the thing but just get into the newspapers, and there are plenty who will: and I should be in a very different position for treating. 'Tis just because, if I meet Darrell again, I don't wish that again it should be all bark and no bite, that I postpone the interview. All your own laziness—exert yourself and find the girl."

"But I can't find the girl, and you know it. And I tell you what, Mr. Losely, Colonel Morley, who is a very shrewd man, does not believe in the girl's existence."

"Does not he! I begin to doubt it myself. But, at all events, you can't doubt of mine, and I am grateful for yours; and since you have given me the trouble of coming here to no purpose, I may as well take the next week's pay in advance—four sovereigns, if you please, Dolly Poole."

CHAPTER XII.

Another halt—Change of Horses—and a turn on the road.

Colonel Morley, on learning that Jasper declined a personal conference with himself, and that the proposal of an interview with Jasper's alleged daughter was equally scouted or put aside, became still more confirmed in his belief that Jasper had not yet been blest with a daughter sufficiently artful to produce. And pleased to think that the sharper was thus unprovided with a means of annoyance, which, skilfully managed, might have been seriously harassing; and convinced that when Jasper found no farther notice taken of him, he himself would be

compelled to petition for the terms he now rejected, the Colonel dryly informed Poole "that his interference was at an end; that if Mr. Losely either through himself, or through Mr. Poole, or any one else, presumed to address Mr. Darrell direct, the offer previously made would be peremptorily and irrevocably withdrawn. I myself," added the Colonel, "shall be going abroad very shortly for the rest of the summer; and should Mr. Losely, in the meanwhile, think better of a proposal which secures him from want, I refer him to Mr. Darrell's solicitor. To that proposal, according to your account of his destitution, he must come sooner or later; and I am glad to see that he has in yourself so judicious an adviser"—a compliment which by no means consoled the miserable Poole.

In the briefest words, Alban informed Darrell of his persuasion that Jasper was not only without evidence to support a daughter's claim, but that the daughter herself was still in that part of Virgil's Hades appropriated to souls that have not yet appeared upon the upper earth; and that Jasper himself, although holding back, as might be naturally expected, in the hope of conditions more to his taste, had only to be left quietly to his own meditations in order to recognise the advantages of emigration. Another £100 a-year or so, it is true, he might bargain for, and such a demand might be worth conceding. But, on the whole, Alban congratulated Darrell upon the probability of hearing very little more of the son-in-law, and no more at all of the son-in-law's daughter.

Darrell made no comment nor reply. A grateful look, a warm pressure of the hand, and, when the subject was changed, a clearer brow and livelier smile, thanked the English Alban better than all words.

CHAPTER XIII.

Colonel Morley shows that it is not without reason that he enjoys his reputation of knowing something about everybody.

"WELL met," said Darrell, the day after Alban had conveyed to him the comforting assurances which had taken one thorn from his side—dispersed one cloud in his evening sky. "Well met," said Darrell, encountering the Colonel a few paces from his own door. "Pray walk with me as far as the New Road. I have promised Lionel to visit the studio of an artist friend of his, in whom he chooses to find a Raffaele, and in whom I suppose, at the price of truth, I shall be urbanely compelled to compliment a dauber."

"Do you speak of Frank Vance?"

"The same."

"You could not visit a worthier man, nor compliment a more promising artist. Vance is one of the few who unite *gusto* and patience, fancy and brushwork. His female heads, in especial, are exquisite, though they are all, I confess, too much like one another. The man himself is a thoroughly fine fellow. He has been much made of in good society, and remains unspoiled. You will find his manner rather off-hand, the reverse of shy; partly, perhaps, because he has in himself the racy freshness and boldness which he gives to his colours; partly, perhaps, also, because he has in his art the self-esteem that patricians take from their pedigree, and shakes a duke by the hand to prevent the duke holding out to him a finger."

"Good," said Darrell, with his rare, manly laugh. "Being shy myself, I like men who meet one half-way. I see that we shall be at our ease with each other."

"And perhaps still more when I tell you that he is connected with an old Eton friend of ours, and deriving no great benefit from that connection; you remember poor Sidney Branthwaite?"

"To be sure. He and I were great friends at Eton—somewhat in the same position of pride and poverty. Of all the boys in the school we two had the least pocket-money. Poor Branthwaite! I lost sight of him afterwards. He went into the Church, got only a curacy, and died young."

"And left a son, poorer than himself, who married Frank Vance's sister."

"You don't say so. The Branthwaites were of good old family; what is Mr. Vance's?"

"Respectable enough. Vance's father was one of those clever men who have too many strings to their bow. He, too, was a painter; but he was also a man of letters, in a sort of a way—had a share in a journal, in which he wrote Criticisms on the Fine Arts. A musical composer, too. Rather a fine gentleman, I suspect, with a wife who was rather a fine lady. Their house was much frequented by artists and literary men: old Vance, in short, was hospitable—his wife extravagant. Believing that posterity would do that justice to his pictures which his contemporaries refused, Vance left to his family no other provision. After selling his pictures, and paying his debts, there was just enough left to bury him. Fortunately, Sir ——, the great painter of that day, had already conceived a liking to Frank Vance—then a mere boy—who had shown genius from an infant, as all true artists do. Sir —— took him into his studio, and gave him lessons. It would have been unlike Sir ——, who was open-hearted, but close-fisted, to give anything else. But the boy contrived to support his mother and sister. That fellow, who is now as arrogant a stickler for the dignity of art as you or my Lord Chancellor may be for that of the bar, stooped then to deal clandestinely with fancy shops, and imitate Watteau on fans. I have two hand-screens that he painted for a shop in Rathbone Place. I suppose he may have got ten shillings for them, and now any admirer of Frank's would give £100 a piece for them."

"That is the true soul in which genius lodges, and out of which fire springs," cried Darrell, cordially. "Give me the fire that lurks in the flint, and answers by light the stroke of the hard steel. I'm glad Lionel has won a friend in such a man. Sidney Branthwaite's son married Vance's sister—after Vance had won reputation?"

"No; while Vance was still a boy. Young Arthur Branthwaite was an orphan. If he had any living relations, they were too poor to assist him. He wrote poetry much praised by the critics (they deserve to be hanged, those critics!)—scribbled, I suppose, in old Vance's journal; saw Mary Vance a little before her father died; fell in

love with her; and on the strength of a volume of verse, in which the critics all solemnly deposed to his surpassing riches—of imagination, rushed to the altar, and sacrificed a wife to the Muses! Those villanous critics will have a dark account to render in the next world! Poor Arthur Branthwaite! For the sake of our old friend his father, I bought a copy of his little volume. Little as the volume was, I could not read it through."

"What!—below contempt?"

"On the contrary, above comprehension! All poetry praised by critics now-a-days is as hard to understand as a hieroglyphic. I own a weakness for Pope and common sense. I could keep up with our age as far as Byron; after him I was thrown out. However, Arthur was declared by the critics to be a great improvement on Byron — more 'poetical in form' — more 'æsthetically artistic'—more 'objective' or 'subjective' (I am sure I forget which, but it was one or the other, nonsensical, and not English) in his views of man and nature. Very possibly. All I know is—I bought the poems, but could not read them; the critics read them, but did not buy. All that Frank Vance could make by painting hand-screens and fans and album-scraps, he sent, I believe, to the poor poet; but I fear it did not suffice. Arthur, I suspect, must have been publishing another volume on his own account. I saw a Monody on something or other, by Arthur Branthwaite, advertised, and no doubt Frank's fans and hand-screens must have melted into the printer's bill. But the Monody never appeared: the poet died, his young wife too. Frank Vance remains a bachelor, and sneers at gentility—abhors poets—is insulted if you promise posthumous fame—gets the best price he can for his pictures—and is proud to be thought a miser. Here we are at his door."

CHAPTER XIV.

Romantic Love pathologically regarded by Frank Vance and Alban Morley.

VANCE was before his easel, Lionel looking over his shoulder. Never was Darrell more genial than he was that day to Frank Vance. The two men took to each other at once, and talked as familiarly as if the retired lawyer and

the rising painter were old fellow-travellers along the same road of life. Darrell was really an exquisite judge of art, and his praise was the more gratifying because discriminating. Of course he gave the due meed of panegyric to the female heads, by which the artist had become so renowned. Lionel took his kinsman aside, and, with a mournful expression of face, showed him the portrait by which all those varying ideals had been suggested—the portrait of Sophy as Titania.

"And that is Lionel," said the artist, pointing to the rough outline of Bottom.

"Pish!" said Lionel, angrily. Then turning to Darrell —"This is *the* Sophy we have failed to find, sir—is it not a lovely face?"

"It is indeed," said Darrell. "But that nameless refinement in expression—that arch yet tender elegance in the simple, watchful attitude—these, Mr. Vance, must be your additions to the original."

"No, I assure you, sir," said Lionel: "besides that elegance, that refinement, there was a delicacy in the look and air of that child, to which Vance failed to do justice. Own it, Frank."

"Reassure yourself, Mr. Darrell," said Vance, "of any fears which Lionel's enthusiasm might excite. He tells me that Titania is in America; yet, after all, I would rather he saw her again—no cure for love at first sight like a second sight of the beloved object after a long absence."

DARRELL (somewhat gravely).—"A hazardous remedy—it might kill, if it did not cure."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"I suspect, from Vance's manner, that he has tested its efficacy on his own person."

LIONEL.—"No, *mon Colonel*—I'll answer for Vance. *He* in love! Never."

Vance coloured—gave a touch to the nose of a Roman senator in the famous classical picture which he was then painting for a merchant at Manchester—and made no reply. Darrell looked at the artist with a sharp and searching glance.

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Then all the more credit to Vance for his intuitive perception of philosophical truth. Suppose, my dear Lionel, that we light, one idle day, on a beautiful novel, a glowing romance—suppose that, by chance, we are

torn from the book in the middle of the interest—we remain under the spell of the illusion—we recall the scenes —we try to guess what should have been the sequel—we think that no romance ever was so captivating, simply because we were not allowed to conclude it. Well, if some years afterwards, the romance fall again in our way, and we open at the page where we left off, we cry, in the maturity of our sober judgment, 'Mawkish stuff!—is this the same thing that I once thought so beautiful?—how one's tastes do alter!'"

DARRELL.—"Does it not depend on the age in which one began the romance?"

LIONEL.—"Rather, let me think, sir, upon the real depth of the interest—the true beauty of the—"

VANCE (interrupting).—"Heroine?—Not at all, Lionel. I once fell in love—incredible as it may seem to you—nine years ago last January. I was too poor then to aspire to any young lady's hand—therefore I did not tell my love, but 'let concealment,' et cetera, et cetera. She went away with her mamma to complete her education on the Continent. I remained 'Patience on a monument.' She was always before my eyes—the slenderest, shyest creature—just eighteen. I never had an idea that she could grow any older, less slender, or less shy. Well, four years afterwards (just before we made our excursion into Surrey, Lionel), she returned to England, still unmarried. I went to a party at which I knew she was to be—saw her, and was cured."

"Bad case of small-pox, or what?" asked the Colonel, smiling.

VANCE.—"Nay; everybody said she was extremely improved—that was the mischief—she had improved herself out of my fancy. I had been faithful as wax to one settled impression, and when I saw a fine, full-formed, young Frenchified lady, quite at her ease, armed with eye-glass and bouquet and bustle, away went my dream of the slim blushing maiden. The Colonel is quite right, Lionel; the romance once suspended, 'tis a haunting remembrance till thrown again in our way, but complete dis-illusion if we try to renew it; though I swear that in my case the interest was deep, and the heroine improved in her beauty. So with you and that dear little creature. See her again, and you'll tease me no more to give you that portrait of

Titania at watch over Bottom's soft slumbers. All a Midsummer Night's Dream, Lionel. Titania fades back into the arms of Oberon, and would not be Titania if you could make her—Mrs. Bottom."

CHAPTER XV.

Even Colonel Morley, knowing everybody and everything, is puzzled when it comes to the plain question—"What will he do with it?"

"I AM delighted with Vance," said Darrell, when he and the Colonel were again walking arm-in-arm. "His is not one of those meagre intellects which have nothing to spare out of the professional line. He has humour. Humour—strength's rich superfluity."

"I like your definition," said the Colonel. "And humour in Vance, though fantastic, is not without subtlety. There was much real kindness in his obvious design to quiz Lionel out of that silly enthusiasm for—"

"For a pretty child, reared up to be a strolling player," interrupted Darrell. "Don't call it silly enthusiasm. I call it chivalrous compassion. Were it other than compassion, it would not be enthusiasm—it would be degradation. But do you believe, then, that Vance's confession of first love, and its cure, was but a whimsical invention?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Not so. Many a grave truth is spoken jestingly. I have no doubt that, allowing for the pardonable exaggeration of a *raconteur*, Vance was narrating an episode in his own life."

DARRELL.—"Do you think that a grown man, who has ever really felt love, can make a jest of it, and to mere acquaintances?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Yes; if he be so thoroughly cured that he has made a jest of it to himself. And the more lightly he speaks of it, perhaps the more solemnly at one time he felt it. Levity is his revenge on the passion that fooled him."

DARRELL.—"You are evidently an experienced philosopher in the lore of such folly. '*Consultus insapientis sapientiæ.*' Yet I can scarcely believe that you have ever been in love."

"Yes, I have," said the Colonel, bluntly, "and very often! Everybody at my age has—except yourself. So

like a man's observation, *that*," continued the Colonel with much tartness. "No man ever thinks another man capable of a profound and romantic sentiment!"

DARRELL.—"True; I own my shallow fault, and beg you ten thousand pardons. So then you really believe, from your own experience, that there is much in Vance's theory and your own very happy illustration? Could we, after many years, turn back to the romance at the page at which we left off, we should—"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Not care a straw to read on! Certainly, half the peculiar charm of a person beloved must be ascribed to locality and circumstance."

DARRELL.—"I don't quite understand you."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Then, as you liked my former illustration, I will explain myself by another one, more homely. In a room to which you are accustomed, there is a piece of furniture, or an ornament, which so exactly suits the place, that you say—'The prettiest thing I ever saw!' You go away—you return—the piece of furniture or the ornament has been moved into another room. You see it there, and you say—'Bless me, is that the thing I so much admired!' The strange room does not suit it—losing its old associations and accessories, it has lost its charm. So it is with human beings—seen in one place, the place would be nothing without them—seen in another, the place without them would be all the better!"

DARRELL (musingly).—"There are some puzzles in life which resemble the riddles a child asks you to solve. Your imagination cannot descend low enough for the right guess. Yet, when you are told, you are obliged to say—'How clever!' Man lives to learn."

"Since you have arrived at that conviction," replied Colonel Morley, amused by his friend's gravity, "I hope that you will rest satisfied with the experiences of Vance and myself; and that if you have a mind to propose to one of the young ladies whose merits we have already discussed, you will not deem it necessary to try what effect a prolonged absence might produce on your good resolution."

"No!" said Darrell, with sudden animation. "Before three days are over, my mind shall be made up."

"Bravo!—as to whom of the three you would ask in marriage?"

"Or as to the idea of ever marrying again. Adieu, I am going to knock at that door."

"Mr. Vyvyan's! Ah, is it so, indeed? Verily, you are a true Dare-all."

"Do not be alarmed. I go afterwards to an exhibition with Lady Adela, and I dine with the Carr Viponts. My choice is not yet made, and my hand still free."

"His hand still free!" muttered the Colonel, pursuing his walk alone. "Yes—but three days hence—What will he do with it?"

CHAPTER XVI.

Guy Darrell's decision.

Guy Darrell returned home from Carr Vipont's dinner at a late hour. On his table was a note from Lady Adela's father, cordially inviting Darrell to pass the next week at his country-house; London was now emptying fast. On the table too was a parcel, containing a book which Darrell had lent to Miss Vyvyan some weeks ago, and a note from herself. In calling at her father's house that morning, he had learned that Mr. Vyvyan had suddenly resolved to take her into Switzerland, with the view of passing the next winter in Italy. The room was filled with loungers of both sexes. Darrell had stayed but a short time. The leave-taking had been somewhat formal—Flora unusually silent. He opened her note, and read the first lines listlessly; those that followed, with a changing cheek and an earnest eye. He laid down the rote very gently, again took it up, and reperused. Then he held it to the candle, and it dropped from his hand in tinder. "The innocent child," murmured he, with a soft paternal tenderness; "she knows not what she writes." He began to pace the room with his habitual restlessness when in solitary thought—often stopping—often sighing heavily. At length his face cleared—his lips became firmly set. He summoned his favourite servant. "Mills," said he, "I shall leave town on horseback as soon as the sun rises. Put what I may require for a day or two into the saddle-bags. Possibly, however, I may be back by dinner-time. Call me at five o'clock, and then go round to the stables I shall require no groom to attend me."

The next morning, while the streets were deserted, no

houses as yet astir, but the sun bright, the air fresh, Guy Darrell rode from his door. He did not return the same day, nor the next, nor at all. But, late in the evening of the second day, his horse, reeking hot, and evidently hard-ridden, stopped at the porch of Fawley Manor-House; and Darrell flung himself from the saddle, and into Fairthorn's arms. "Back again—back again—and to leave no more!" said he, looking round; "*Spes et Fortuna valete!*"

CHAPTER XVII.

A Man's Letter—unsatisfactory and provoking as a man's letters always are.

GUY DARRELL TO COLONEL MORLEY.

Fawley Manor-House, August 19, 18—.

I HAVE decided, my dear Alban. I did not take three days to do so, though the third day may be just over ere you learn my decision. I shall never marry again: I abandon that last dream of declining years. My object in returning to the London world was to try whether I could not find, amongst the fairest and most attractive women that the world produces—at least to an English eye—some one who could inspire me with that singleness of affection which could alone justify the hope that I might win, in return, a wife's esteem and a contented home. That object is now finally relinquished, and, with it, all idea of resuming the life of cities. I might have re-entered a political career, had I first secured to myself a mind sufficiently serene and healthful for duties that need the concentration of thought and desire. Such a state of mind I cannot secure. I have striven for it; I am baffled. It is said that politics are a jealous mistress—that they require the whole man. The saying is not invariably true in the application it commonly receives—that is, a politician may have some other employment of intellect, which rather enlarges his powers than distracts their political uses. Successful politicians have united with great parliamentary toil and triumph legal occupations or learned studies. But politics do require that the *heart* should be free, and at peace from all more absorbing private anxieties—from the gnawing of a memory or a care, which dulls ambition and paralyses

energy. In this sense politics do require the whole man. If I returned to politics now, I should fail to them, and they to me. I feel that the brief interval between me and the grave has need of repose: I find that repose here. I have therefore given the necessary orders to dismiss the pompous retinue which I left behind me, and instructed my agent to sell my London house for whatever it may fetch. I was unwilling to sell it before—unwilling to abandon the hope, however faint, that I might yet regain strength for action. But the very struggle to obtain such strength leaves me exhausted more.

You may believe that it is not without a pang, less of pride than of remorse, that I resign unfulfilled the object towards which all my earlier life was so resolutely shaped. The house I promised my father to re-found dies to dust in my grave. To my father's blood no heir to my wealth can trace. Yet it is a consolation to think that Lionel Haughton is one on whom my father would have smiled approvingly. At my death, therefore, at least the old name will not die; Lionel Haughton will take and be worthy to bear it. Strange weakness of mine, you will say; but I cannot endure the thought that the old name should be quite blotted out of the land. I trust that Lionel may early form a suitable and happy marriage. Sure that he will not choose ignobly, I impose no fetters on his choice.

One word only on that hateful subject, confided so tardily to your friendship, left so thankfully to your discretion. Now that I have once more buried myself in Fawley, it is very unlikely that the man it pains me to name will seek me here. If he does, he cannot molest me as if I were in the London world. Continue, then, I pray you, to leave him alone. And, in adopting your own shrewd belief, that after all there is no such child as he pretends to claim, my mind becomes tranquillised on all that part of my private griefs.

Farewell, old school-friend! Here, so far as I can foretell—here, where my life began, it returns, when Heaven pleases, to close. Here I could not ask you to visit me: what is rest to me would be loss of time to you. But in my late and vain attempt to re-enter that existence in which you have calmly and wisely gathered round yourself, "all that should accompany old age—honour, love, obedience, troops of friends"—nothing so repaid the effort:—

nothing now so pleasantly remains to recollection—as the brief renewal of that easy commune which men like me never know, save with those whose laughter brings back to them a gale from the old play-ground. "*Vive vale;*" I will not add, "*Sis memor mei.*" So many my obligations to your kindness, that you will be forced to remember me whenever you recall the *not* "painful subjects" of early friendship and lasting gratitude. Recall only those when reminded of

GUY DARRELL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

No coinage in circulation so fluctuates in value as the worth of a Marriageable Man.

COLONEL MORLEY was not surprised (*that*, we know, he could not be, by any fresh experience of human waywardness and caprice), but much disturbed and much vexed by the unexpected nature of Darrell's communication. Schemes for Darrell's future had become plans of his own. Talk with his old school-fellow had, within the last three months, entered into the pleasures of his age. Darrell's abrupt and final renunciation of this social world, made at once a void in the business of Alban's mind, and in the affections of Alban's heart. And no adequate reason assigned for so sudden a flight and so morbid a resolve! Some tormenting remembrance—some rankling grief—distinct from those of which Alban was cognisant, from those in which he had been consulted, was implied, but by vague and general hints. But what was the remembrance or the grief, Alban Morley, who knew everything, was quite persuaded that Darrell would never suffer him to know. Could it be in any way connected with those three young ladies to whom Darrell's attentions had been so perversely impartial? The Colonel did not fail to observe that to those young ladies Darrell's letter made no allusion. Was it not possible that he had really felt for one of them a deeper sentiment than a man advanced in years ever likes to own even to his nearest friend—hazarded a proposal, and met with a rebuff? If so, Alban conjectured the female culprit by whom the sentiment had been inspired, and the rebuff administered. "That mischievous kitten, Flora Vyvyan,"

growled the Colonel. "I always felt that she had the claws of a tigress under her *patte de velours!*" Roused by this suspicion, he sallied forth to call on the Vyvyans. Mr. Vyvyan, a widower, one of those quiet gentleman-like men who sit much in the drawing-room and like receiving morning visitors, was at home to him. "So Darrell has left town for the season," said the Colonel, pushing straight to the point.

"Yes," said Mr. Vyvyan. "I had a note from him this morning, to say that he had renounced all hope of——"

"What?" cried the Colonel.

"Joining us in Switzerland. I am so sorry. Flora still more sorry. She is accustomed to have her own way, and she had set her heart on hearing Darrell read 'Manfred' in sight of the Jung Frau!"

"Um!" said the Colonel. "What might be sport to her might be death to him. A man at his age is not too old to fall in love with a young lady of hers. But he is too old not to be extremely ridiculous to *such* a young lady if he does."

"Colonel Morley—Fie!" cried an angry voice behind him. Flora had entered the room unobserved. Her face was much flushed, and her eyelids looked as if tears had lately swelled beneath them, and were swelling still.

"What have I said to merit your rebuke?" asked the Colonel composedly.

"Said! coupled the thought of ridicule with the name of Mr. Darrell!"

"Take care, Morley," said Mr. Vyvyan, laughing. "Flora is positively superstitious in her respect for Guy Darrell; and you cannot offend her more than by implying that he is mortal. Nay, child, it is very natural. Quite apart from his fame, there is something in that man's familiar talk, or rather, perhaps, in the very sound of his voice, which makes most other society seem flat and insipid. I feel it myself. And when Flora's young admirers flutter and babble round her—just after Darrell has quitted his chair beside her—they seem very poor company. I am sure, Flora," continued Vyvyan, kindly, "that the mere acquaintance of such a man has done you much good; and I am now in great hopes that, whenever you marry, it will be a man of sense."

"Um!" again said the Colonel, eyeing Flora aslant, but

with much attention. "How I wish, for my friend's sake, that he was of an age which inspired Miss Vyvyan with less—veneration."

Flora turned her back on the Colonel, looking out of the window, and her small foot beating the ground with nervous irritation.

"It was given out that Darrell intended to marry again," said Mr. Vyvyan. "A man of that sort requires a very superior, highly-educated woman; and if Miss Carr Vipont had been a little more of his age, she would have just suited him. But I am patriot enough to hope that he will remain single, and have no wife but his country, like Mr. Pitt."

The Colonel having now satisfied his curiosity, and assured himself that Darrell was, there at least, no rejected suitor, rose and approached Flora to make peace and to take leave. As he held out his hand, he was struck with the change in a countenance usually so gay in its aspect—it spoke of more than dejection, it betrayed distress; when she took his hand, she retained it, and looked into his eyes wistfully; evidently there was something on her mind which she wished to express and did not know how. At length she said in a whisper, "You are Mr. Darrell's most intimate friend; I have heard him say so; shall you see him soon?"

"I fear not; but why?"

"Why? you, his friend; do you not perceive that he is not happy? I, a mere stranger, saw it at the first. You should cheer and comfort him; *you* have that right—it is a noble privilege."

"My dear young lady," said the Colonel, touched, "you have a better heart than I thought for. It is true Darrell is not a happy man; but can you give me any message that might cheer him more than an old bachelor's commonplace exhortations to take heart, forget the rains of yesterday, and hope for some gleam of sun on the morrow?"

"No," said Flora, sadly, "it would be a presumption indeed in me to affect the consoler's part; but"—(her lips quivered)—"but if I may judge by his letter, I may never see him again."

"His letter! He has written to *you*, then, as well as to your father?"

"Yes," said Flora, confused and colouring, "a few lines in answer to a silly note of mine: yes, tell him that I shall never forget his kind counsels, his delicate, indulgent construction of—of—in short, tell him my father is right, and that I shall be better and wiser all my life for the few short weeks in which I have known Guy Darrell."

"What secrets are you two whispering there?" asked Mr. Vyvyan from his easy-chair.

"Ask her ten years hence," said the Colonel, as he retreated to the door. "The fairest leaves in the flower are the last that the bud will disclose."

From Mr. Vyvyan the Colonel went to Lord ——'s. His lordship had also heard from Darrell that morning; Darrell declined the invitation to —— Hall; business at Fawley. Lady Adela had borne the disappointment with her wonted serenity of temper, and had gone out shopping. Darrell had certainly not offered his hand in that quarter; had he done so—whether refused or accepted—all persons yet left in London would have heard the news. Thence the Colonel repaired to Carr Vipont's. Lady Selina was at home, and exceedingly cross. Carr had been astonished by a letter from Mr. Darrell, dated Fawley—left town for the season without even calling to take leave—a most eccentric man. She feared his head was a little touched—that he knew it, but did not like to own it—perhaps the doctors had told him he must keep quiet, and not excite himself with politics. "I had thought," said Lady Selina, "that he might have felt a growing attachment for Honoria; and considering the disparity of years, and that Honoria certainly might marry any one, he was too proud to incur the risk of refusal. But I will tell you in confidence, as a relation and dear friend, that Honoria has a very superior mind, and might have overlooked the mere age: congenial tastes—you understand. But on thinking it all over, I begin to doubt whether *that* be the true reason for his running away in this wild sort of manner. My maid tells me that his house-steward called to say that the establishment was to be broken up. That looks as if he had resigned London for good; just, too, when, Carr says, the CRISIS, so long put off, is sure to burst on us. I'm quite sick of clever men—one never knows how to trust them; if they are not dishonest they are eccentric! I have just been telling Honoria that clever men are, after all, the most tiresome

husbands. Well, what makes you so silent? What do you say? Why don't you speak?"

"I am slowly recovering from my shock," said the Colonel. "So Darrell shirks THE CRISIS, and has not even hinted a preference for Honoria, the very girl in all London that would have made him a safe, rational companion. I told him so, and he never denied it. But it is a comfort to think he is no loss. Old monster!"

"Nay," said Lady Selina, mollified by so much sympathy, "I don't say he is no loss. Honestly speaking—between ourselves—I think he is a very great loss. An alliance between him and Honoria would have united all the Vipont influence. Lord Montfort has the greatest confidence in Darrell; and if this CRISIS comes, it is absolutely necessary for the Vipont interest that it should find somebody who can speak. Really, my dear Colonel Morley, you who have such an influence over this very odd man, should exert it now. One must not be overnice in times of CRISIS; the country is at stake, Cousin Alban."

"I will do my best," said the Colonel; "I am quite aware that an alliance which would secure Darrell's talents to the House of Vipont, and the House of Vipont to Darrell's talents, would—but 'tis no use talking, we must not sacrifice Honoria even on the altar of her country's interest!"

"Sacrifice! Nonsense! The man is not young certainly, but then what a grand creature, and so clever."

"Clever—yes! But that was your very objection to him five minutes ago."

"I forgot the CRISIS.—One don't want clever men every day, but there *are* days when one does want them!"

"I envy you that aphorism. But from what you now imply, I fear that Honoria may have allowed her thoughts to settle upon what may never take place; and if so, she may fret."

"Fret! a daughter of mine fret!—and of all my daughters, Honoria! A girl of the best-disciplined mind! Fret! what a word!—vulgar!"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"So it is; I blush for it; but let us understand each other. If Darrell proposed for Honoria, you think, ambition apart, she would esteem him sufficiently for a decided preference"

LADY SELINA.—"If that be his doubt, re-assure him. He

is shy—men of genius are; Honoria *would esteem* him! Till he has actually proposed, it would compromise her to say more even to you."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"And if that be not the doubt, and if I ascertain that Darrell has no idea of proposing, Honoria would——"

LADY SELINA.—"Despise him. Ah, I see by your countenance that you think I should prepare her. Is it so, frankly?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Frankly, then. I think Guy Darrell, like many other men, has been so long making up his mind to marry again, that he has lost the right moment, and will never find it."

Lady Selina smells at her vinaigrette, and replies in her softest, affectedest, civilest, and crushingest manner—

"*Poor*—DEAR—OLD MAN!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Man is not permitted, with ultimate impunity, to exasperate the envies, and insult the miseries of those around him, by a systematic perseverance in wilful—Celibacy. In vain may he scheme, in the marriage of injured friends, to provide arm-chairs, and footstools, and prattling babies for the luxurious delectation of his indolent age. The avenging Eumenides (being themselves ancient virgins neglected) shall humble his insolence, baffle his projects, and condemn his declining years to the horrors of solitude,—rarely even wakening his soul to the grace of repentance.

THE Colonel, before returning home, dropped into the Clubs, and took care to give to Darrell's sudden disappearance a plausible and commonplace construction. The season was just over. Darrell had gone to the country. The town establishment was broken up, because the house in Carlton Gardens was to be sold. Darrell did not like the situation—found the air relaxing—Park Lane or Grosvenor Square were on higher ground. Besides, the staircase was bad for a house of such pretensions—not suited to large parties. Next season Darrell might be in a position when he would have to give large parties, &c. &c. As no one is inclined to suppose that a man will retire from public life just when he has a chance of office, so the Clubs took Alban Morley's remarks unsuspiciously, and generally agreed that Darrell showed great tact in absenting himself from town during the transition state of politics that always precedes a CRISIS, and that it

was quite clear that he calculated on playing a great part when the CRISIS was over, by finding his house had grown too small for him. Thus paving the way to Darrell's easy return to the world, should he repent of his retreat (a chance which Alban by no means dismissed from his reckoning), the Colonel returned home to find his nephew George awaiting him there. The scholarly clergyman had ensconced himself in the back drawing-room, fitted up as a library, and was making free with the books. "What have you there, George?" asked the Colonel, after shaking him by the hand. "You seemed quite absorbed in its contents, and would not have noticed my presence but for Gyp's bark."

"A volume of poems I never chanced to meet before, full of true genius."

"Bless me, poor Arthur Branthwaite's poems. And you were positively reading those—not induced to do so by respect for his father? Could you make head or tail of them?"

"There is a class of poetry which displeases middle age by the very attributes which render it charming to the young; for each generation has a youth with idiosyncrasies peculiar to itself, and a peculiar poetry by which those idiosyncrasies are expressed."

Here George was beginning to grow metaphysical, and somewhat German, when his uncle's face assumed an expression which can only be compared to that of a man who dreads a very severe and long operation. George humanely hastened to relieve his mind.

"But I will not bore you at present."

"Thank you," said the Colonel, brightening up.

"Perhaps you will lend me the book. I am going down to Lady Montfort's by-and-by, and I can read it by the way."

"Yes, I will lend it to you till next season. Let me have it again then, to put on the table when Frank Vance comes to breakfast with me. The poet was his brother-in-law; and though, for that reason, poets and poetry are a sore subject with Frank, yet, the last time he breakfasted here, I felt by the shake of his hand in parting, that he felt pleased by a mark of respect to all that is left of poor Arthur Branthwaite. So you are going to Lady Montfort? Ask her why she cuts me!"

"My dear uncle! You know how secluded her life is at present; but she has charged me to assure you of her unalterable regard for you; and whenever her health and spirits are somewhat more recovered, I have no doubt that she will ask you to give her the occasion to make that assurance in person."

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Can her health and spirits continue so long affected by grief for the loss of that distant acquaintance whom the law called her husband?"

GEORGE.—"She is very far from well, and her spirits are certainly much broken. And now, uncle, for the little favour I came to ask. Since you presented me to Mr. Darrell, he kindly sent me two or three invitations to dinner, which my frequent absence from town would not allow me to accept. I ought to call on him; and, as I feel ashamed not to have done so before, I wish you would accompany me to his house. One happy word from you would save me a relapse into stutter. When I want to apologise I always stutter."

"Darrell has left town," said the Colonel, roughly, "you have missed an opportunity that will never occur again. The most charming companion; an intellect so manly yet so sweet! *I* shall never find such another." And for the first time in thirty years a tear stole to Alban Morley's eye.

GEORGE.—"When did he leave town?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Three days ago."

GEORGE.—"Three days ago! and for the Continent again?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"No; for the Hermitage, George. I have such a letter from him! You know how many years he has been absent from the world. When, this year, he re-appeared, he and I grew more intimate than we had ever been since we had left school; for though the same capital held us before, he was then too occupied for much familiarity with an idle man like me. But just when I was intertwining what is left of my life with the bright threads of his, he snaps the web asunder: he quits this London world again; says he will return to it no more."

GEORGE.—"Yet I did hear that he proposed to renew his parliamentary career; nay, that he was about to form a second marriage, with Honoria Vipont?"

COLONEL MORLEY.—"Mere gossip—not true. No, he

will never marry again. Three days ago I thought it certain that he would—certain that I should find for my old age a nook in his home—the easiest chair in his social circle; that my daily newspaper would have a fresh interest, in the praise of his name, or the report of his speech; that I should walk proudly into White's, sure to hear there of Guy Darrell; that I should keep from misanthropical rust my dry knowledge of life, planning shrewd panegyrics to him of a young happy wife, needing all his indulgence—panegyrics to her of the high-minded sensitive man, claiming tender respect, and delicate soothing;—that thus, day by day, I should have made more pleasant the home in which I should have planted myself, and found in his children boys to lecture and girls to spoil. Don't be jealous, George. I like your wife, I love your little ones, and you will inherit all I have to leave. But to an old bachelor, who would keep young to the last, there is no place so sunny as the hearth of an old school-friend. But my house of cards is blown down—talk of it no more—'tis a painful subject. You met Lionel Haughton here the last time you called—how did you like him?"

"Very much indeed."

"Well then, since you cannot call on Darrell, call on him."

George (with animation).—"It is just what I meant to do—what is his address?"

Colonel Morley.—"There is his card—take it. He was here last night to inquire if I knew where Darrell had gone, though no one in his household, nor I either, suspected till this morning that Darrell had left town for good. You will find Lionel at home, for I sent him word I would call. But really I am not up to it now. Tell him from me that Mr. Darrell will not return to Carlton Gardens this season, and is gone to Fawley. At present Lionel need not know more—you understand? And now, my dear George, good-day."

CHAPTER XX.

Each generation has its own critical canons in poetry as well as in political creeds, financial systems, or whatever other changeable matters of taste are called "Settled Questions" and "Fixed Opinions."

GEORGE, musing much over all that his uncle had said respecting Darrell, took his way to Lionel's lodgings. The young man received him with the cordial greeting due from Darrell's kinsman to Colonel Morley's nephew, but tempered by the respect no less due to the distinction and the calling of the eloquent preacher.

Lionel was perceptibly affected by learning that Darrell had thus suddenly returned to the gloomy beech-woods of Fawley; and he evinced his anxious interest in his benefactor with so much spontaneous tenderness of feeling, that George, as if in sympathy, warmed into the same theme. "I can well conceive," said he "your affection for Mr. Darrell. I remember, when I was a boy, how powerfully he impressed me, though I saw but little of him. He was then in the zenith of his career, and had but few moments to give to a boy like me; but the ring of his voice and the flash of his eye sent me back to school, dreaming of fame, and intent on prizes. I spent part of one Easter vacation at his house in town; he bade his son, who was my school-fellow, invite me."

LIONEL.—"You knew his son? How Mr. Darrell has felt that loss!"

GEORGE.—"Heaven often veils its most provident mercy in what to man seems its sternest inflictions. That poor boy must have changed his whole nature, if his life had not to a father, like Mr. Darrell, occasioned grief sharper than his death."

LIONEL.—"You amaze me. Mr. Darrell spoke of him as a boy of great promise."

GEORGE.—"He had that kind of energy which to a father conveys the idea of promise, and which might deceive those older than himself—a fine bright-eyed bold-tongued boy, with just enough awe of his father to bridle his worst qualities before him."

LIONEL.—"What were those?"

GEORGE.—"Headstrong arrogance—relentless cruelty. He had a pride which would have shamed his father out of

pride, had Guy Darrell detected its nature—purse pride! I remember his father said to me with a half-laugh, 'My boy must not be galled and mortified as I was every hour at school—clothes patched and pockets empty.' And so, out of mistaken kindness, Mr. Darrell ran into the opposite extreme, and the son was proud, not of his father's fame, but of his father's money, and withal not generous, nor exactly extravagant, but using money as power—power that allowed him to insult an equal or to buy a slave. In a word, his nickname at school was 'Sir Giles Overreach.' His death was the result of his strange passion for tormenting others. He had a fag who could not swim, and who had the greatest terror of the water; and it was while driving this child into the river out of his depth, that cramp seized himself, and he was drowned. Yes, when I think what that boy would have been as man, succeeding to Darrell's wealth—and had Darrell persevered (as he would, perhaps, if the boy had lived) in his public career—to the rank and titles he would probably have acquired and bequeathed—again, I say, in man's affliction is often Heaven's mercy."

Lionel listened aghast. George continued—"Would that I could speak as plainly to Mr. Darrell himself! For we find constantly in the world that there is no error that misleads us like the error that is half a truth wrenched from the other half; and nowhere is such an error so common as when man applies it to the judgment of some event in his own life, and separates calamity from consolation."

LIONEL.—"True; but who could have the heart to tell a mourning father that his dead son was worthless?"

GEORGE.—"Alas! my young friend, the preacher must sometimes harden his own heart if he would strike home to another's soul. But I am not sure that Mr. Darrell would need so cruel a kindness. I believe that his clear intellect must have divined some portions of his son's nature which enabled him to bear the loss with fortitude. And he did bear it bravely. But now, Mr. Haughton, if you have the rest of the day free, I am about to make you an unceremonious proposition for its disposal. A lady who knew Mr. Darrell when she was very young, has a strong desire to form your acquaintance. She resides on the banks of the Thames, a little above Twickenham. I have

promised to call on her this evening, shall we dine together at Richmond? and afterwards we can take a boat to her villa."

Lionel at once accepted, thinking so little of the lady that he did not even ask her name. He was pleased to have a companion with whom he could talk of Darrell. He asked but delay to write a few lines of affectionate inquiry to his kinsman at Fawley, and, while he wrote, George took out Arthur Branthwaite's poems, and resumed their perusal. Lionel having sealed his letter, George extended the book to him. "Here are some remarkable poems by a brother-in-law of that remarkable artist, Frank Vance."

"Frank Vance! True, he had a brother-in-law a poet. I admire Frank so much; and, though he professes to sneer at poetry, he is so associated in my mind with poetical images, that I am prepossessed beforehand in favour of all that brings him, despite himself, in connection with poetry."

"Tell me then," said George, pointing out a passage in the volume, "what you think of these lines. My good uncle would call them gibberish. I am not sure that I can construe them; but when I was your age, I think I could —what say you?"

Lionel glanced. "Exquisite indeed!—nothing can be clearer—they express exactly a sentiment in myself that I could never explain."

"Just so," said George, laughing. "Youth has a sentiment that it cannot explain, and the sentiment is expressed in a form of poetry that middle age cannot construe. It is true that poetry of the grand order interests equally all ages; but the world ever throws out a poetry not of the grandest; not meant to be durable—not meant to be universal, but following the shifts and changes of human sentiment, and just like those pretty sundials formed by flowers, which bloom to tell the hour, open their buds to tell it, and, telling it, fade themselves from time."

Not listening to the critic, Lionel continued to read the poems, exclaiming, "How exquisite!—how true!"

CHAPTER XXI.

In Life, as in Art, the Beautiful moves in curves.

THEY have dined.—George Morley takes the oars, and the boat cuts through the dance of waves flushed by the golden sunset. Beautiful river! which might furnish the English tale-teller with legends wild as those culled on shores licked by Hydaspes, and sweet as those which Cephisus ever blended with the songs of nightingales and the breath of violets! But what true English poet ever names thee, O Father Thames, without a melodious tribute? And what child ever whiled away summer noons along thy grassy banks, nor hallowed thy remembrance among the fairy days of life?

Silently Lionel bent over the side of the gliding boat, his mind carried back to the same soft stream five years ago. How vast a space in his short existence those five years seemed to fill! And how distant from the young man, rich in the attributes of wealth, armed with each weapon of distinction, seemed the hour when the boy had groaned aloud, "Fortune is so far, Fame so impossible!" Farther and farther yet than his present worldly station from his past, seemed the image that had first called forth in his breast the dreamy sentiment, which the sternest of us in after life never utterly forget. Passions rage and vanish, and when all their storms are gone, yea, it may be, at the verge of the very grave, we look back and see like a star the female face, even though it be a child's, that first set us vaguely wondering at the charm in a human presence, at the void in a smile withdrawn! How many of us could recall a Beatrice through the gaps of ruined hope, seen, as by the Florentine, on the earth a guileless infant, in the heavens a spirit glorified! Yes—Laura was an affectation—Beatrice a reality!

George's voice broke somewhat distastefully on Lionel's reverie. "We near our destination, and you have not asked me even the name of the lady to whom you are to render homage. It is Lady Montfort, widow to the last Marquess. You have no doubt heard Mr. Darrell speak of her?"

"Never Mr. Darrell—Colonel Morley often. And in the

world I have heard her cited as perhaps the handsomest, and certainly the haughtiest, woman in England."

"Never heard Mr. Darrell mention her! that is strange, indeed," said George Morley, catching at Lionel's first words, and unnoticing his after comment. "She was much in his house as a child, shared in his daughter's education."

"Perhaps for that very reason he shuns her name. Never but once did I hear him allude to his daughter; nor can I wonder at that, if it be true, as I have been told by people who seem to know very little of the particulars, that, while yet scarcely out of the nursery, she fled from his house with some low adventurer—a Mr. Hammond—died abroad the first year of that unhappy marriage."

"Yes, that is the correct outline of the story; and as you guess, it explains why Mr. Darrell avoids mention of one whom he associates with his daughter's name, though, if you desire a theme dear to Lady Montfort, you can select none that more interests her grateful heart, than praise of the man who saved her mother from penury, and secured to herself the accomplishments and instruction which have been her chief solace."

"Chief solace! Was she not happy with Lord Montfort? What sort of man was he?"

"I owe to Lord Montfort the living I hold, and I can remember the good qualities alone of a benefactor. If Lady Montfort was not happy with him, it is just to both to say that she never complained. But there is much in Lady Montfort's character which the Marquess apparently failed to appreciate; at all events, they had little in common, and what was called Lady Montfort's haughtiness was perhaps but the dignity with which a woman of grand nature checks the pity that would debase her—the admiration that would sully—guards her own beauty, and protects her husband's name. Here we are. Will you stay for a few minutes in the boat, while I go to prepare Lady Montfort for your visit?"

George leapt ashore, and Lionel remained under the covert of mighty willows that dipped their leaves into the wave. Looking through the green interstices of the foliage, he saw at the far end of the lawn, on a curving bank by which the glittering tide shot oblique, a simple arbour—an arbour like that from which he had looked

upon summer stars five years ago—not so densely covered with the honeysuckle; still the honeysuckle, recently trained there, was fast creeping up the sides; and through the trellis of the woodwork and the leaves of the flowering shrub, he just caught a glimpse of some form within—the white robe of a female form in a slow gentle movement—tending perhaps the flowers that wreathed the arbour. Now it was still, now it stirred again; now it was suddenly lost to view. Had the inmate left the arbour? Was the inmate Lady Montfort? George Morley's step had not passed in that direction?

CHAPTER XXII.

A quiet scene—an unquiet heart.

MEANWHILE, not far from the willow-bank which sheltered Lionel, but far enough to be out of her sight, and beyond her hearing, George Morley found Lady Montfort seated alone. It was a spot on which Milton might have placed the lady in "Comus"—a circle of the smoothest sward, ringed everywhere (except at one opening which left the glassy river in full view) with thick bosks of dark evergreens, and shrubs of livelier verdure; oak and chestnut backing and overhanging all. Flowers, too, raised on rustic tiers and stages; a tiny fountain, shooting up from a basin starred with the water-lily; a rustic table, on which lay books and the implements of woman's graceful work; so that the place had the home-look of a chamber, and spoke that intense love of the out-door life which abounds in our old poets from Chaucer down to the day when minstrels, polished into wits, took to Wills' Coffee-house, and the lark came no more to bid bards

"Good morrow
From his watch-tower in the skies."

But long since, thank Heaven, we have again got back the English poetry which chimes to the babble of the waters, and the riot of the birds; and just as that poetry is the freshest which the out-door life has the most nourished, so I believe that there is no surer sign of the rich vitality which finds its raciest joys in sources the most innocent, than the child-like taste for that same out-

door life. Whether you take from fortune the palace or the cottage, add to your chambers a hall in the courts of Nature. Let the earth but give you room to stand on; well, look up—Is it nothing to have for your roof-tree—Heaven?

Caroline Montfort (be her titles dropped) is changed since we last saw her. The beauty is not less in degree, but it has gained in one attribute, lost in another; it commands less, it touches more. Still in deep mourning, the sombre dress throws a paler shade over the cheek. The eyes, more sunken beneath the brow, appear larger, softer. There is that expression of fatigue which either accompanies impaired health or succeeds to mental struggle and disquietude. But the coldness or pride of mien which was peculiar to Caroline as a wife is gone—as if in widowhood it was no longer needed. A something like humility prevailed over the look and the bearing which had been so tranquilly majestic. As at the approach of her cousin she started from her seat, there was a nervous tremor in her eagerness; a rush of colour to the cheeks; an anxious quivering of the lip; a flutter in the tones of the sweet low voice:—"Well, George."

"Mr. Darrell is not in London; he went to Fawley three days ago; at least he is there now. I have this from my uncle, to whom he wrote; and whom his departure has vexed and saddened."

"Three days ago! It must have been he, then! I was not deceived," murmured Caroline, and her eyes wandered round.

"There is no truth in the report you heard that he was to marry Honoria Vipont. My uncle thinks he will never marry again, and implies that he has resumed his solitary life at Fawley with a resolve to quit it no more."

Lady Montfort listened silently, bending her face over the fountain, and dropping amidst its playful spray the leaves of a rose which she had abstractedly plucked as George was speaking.

"I have, therefore, fulfilled your commission so far," renewed George Morley. "I have ascertained that Mr. Darrell is alive, and doubtless well; so that it could not have been his ghost that startled you amidst yonder thicket. But I have done more: I have forestalled the wish you expressed to become acquainted with young

Haughton; and your object in postponing the accomplishment of that wish while Mr. Darrell himself was in town, having ceased with Mr. Darrell's departure, I have ventured to bring the young man with me. He is in the boat yonder. Will you receive him? Or—but, my dear cousin, are you not too unwell to-day? What is the matter? Oh, I can easily make an excuse for you to Haughton. I will run and do so."

"No, George, no. I am as well as usual. I will see Mr. Haughton. All that you have heard of him, and have told me, interests me so much in his favour; and besides—" She did not finish the sentence; but, led away by some other thought, asked, "Have you no news of our missing friend?"

"None as yet; but in a few days I shall renew my search. Now, then, I will go for Haughton."

"Do so; and, George, when you have presented him to me, will you kindly join that dear anxious child yonder? She is in the new arbour, or near it—her favourite spot. You must sustain her spirits, and give her hope. You cannot guess how eagerly she looks forward to your visits, and how gratefully she relies on your exertions."

George shook his head half despondingly, and saying briefly, "My exertions have established no claim to her gratitude as yet," went quickly back for Lionel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Something on an old subject, which has never been said before.

Although Lionel was prepared to see a very handsome woman in Lady Montfort, the beauty of her countenance took him by surprise. No preparation by the eulogies of description can lessen the effect that the first sight of a beautiful object produces upon a mind to which refinement of idea gives an accurate and quick comprehension of beauty. Be it a work of art, a scene in nature, or, rarest of all, a human face divine, a beauty never before beheld strikes us with hidden pleasure, like a burst of light: And it is a pleasure that elevates; the imagination feels itself richer by a new idea of excellence; for not only is real beauty wholly original, having no prototype, but its imme-

diate influence is spiritual. It may seem strange—I appeal to every observant artist if the assertion be not true—but the first sight of the most perfect order of female beauty, rather than courting, rebukes and strikes back, every grosser instinct that would alloy admiration. There must be some meanness and blemish in the beauty which the sensualist no sooner beholds than he covets. In the higher incarnation of the abstract idea which runs through all our notions of moral good and celestial purity—even if the moment the eye sees the heart loves the image—the love has in it something of the reverence which it was said the charms of Virtue would produce could her form be made visible; nor could mere human love obtrude itself till the sweet awe of the first effect had been familiarised away. And I apprehend that it is this exalting or etherealising attribute of beauty to which all poets, all writers who would poetise the realities of life, have unconsciously rendered homage, in the rank to which they elevate what, stripped of such attribute, would be but a gaudy idol of painted clay. If from the loftiest epic to the tritest novel, a heroine is often little more than a name to which we are called upon to bow, as to a symbol representing beauty; and if we ourselves (be we ever so indifferent in our common life to fair faces) feel that, in art at least, imagination needs an image of the Beautiful—if, in a word, both poet and reader here would not be left excuseless, it is because in our inmost hearts there is a sentiment which links the ideal of beauty with the Supersensual. Wouldst thou, for instance, form some vague conception of the shape worn by a pure soul released? wouldst thou give to it the likeness of an ugly hag? or wouldst thou not ransack all thy remembrances and conceptions of forms most beauteous, to clothe the holy image? Do so: now bring it thus robed with the richest graces before thy mind's eye. Well, seest thou now the excuse for poets in the rank they give to BEAUTY? Seest thou now how high from the realm of the senses soars the mysterious Archetype? Without the idea of beauty, couldst thou conceive a form in which to clothe a soul that has entered heaven?

CHAPTER XXIV.

Agreeable surprises are the perquisites of youth.

If the beauty of Lady Montfort's countenance took Lionel by surprise, still more might he wonder at the winning kindness of her address—a kindness of look, manner, voice, which seemed to welcome him not as a chance acquaintance but as a new-found relation. The first few sentences, in giving them a subject of common interest, introduced into their converse a sort of confiding household familiarity. For Lionel, ascribing Lady Montfort's gracious reception to her early recollections of his kinsman, began at once to speak of Guy Darrell; and in a little time they were walking over the turf, or through the winding alleys of the garden, linking talk to the same theme, she by question, he by answer—he, charmed to expatiate—she, pleased to listen—and liking each other more and more, as she recognised in all he said a bright young heart, overflowing with grateful and proud affection, and as he felt instinctively that he was with one who sympathised in his enthusiasm—one who had known the great man in his busy day, ere the rush of his career had paused, whose childhood had lent a smile to the great man's home before childhood and smile had left it.

As they thus conversed, Lionel now and then, in the turns of their walk, caught a glimpse of George Morley in the distance, walking also side by side with some young companion, and ever as he caught that glimpse a strange restless curiosity shot across his mind, and distracted it even from praise of Guy Darrell. Who could that be with George? Was it a relation of Lady Montfort's? The figure was not in mourning; its shape seemed slight and youthful—now it passes by that acacia tree,—standing for a moment apart and distinct from George's shadow, but its own outline dim in the deepening twilight—now it has passed on, lost amongst the laurels.

A turn in the walk brought Lionel and Lady Montfort before the windows of the house, which was not large for the rank of the owner, but commodious, with no pretence to architectural beauty—dark-red brick, a century and a half old—irregular; jutting forth here, receding there, so as to produce that depth of light and shadow, which lends

a certain picturesque charm even to the least ornate buildings—a charm to which the Gothic architecture owes half its beauty. Jessamine, roses, woodbine, ivy, trained up the angles and between the windows. Altogether the house had that air of HOME which had been wanting to the regal formality of Montfort Court. One of the windows, raised above the ground by a short winding stair, stood open. Lights had just been brought into the room within, and Lionel's eye was caught by the gleam.

Lady Montfort turned up the stair, and Lionel followed her into the apartment. A harp stood at one corner—not far from it a piano and music-stand. On one of the tables there were the implements of drawing—a sketch in water-colours half finished.

"Our work-room," said Lady Montfort, with a warm cheerful smile, and yet Lionel could see that tears were in her eyes—"mine and my dear pupil's. Yes, that harp is hers. Is he still fond of music—I mean Mr. Darrell?"

"Yes, though he does not care for it in crowds; but he can listen for hours to Fairthorn's lute. You remember Mr. Fairthorn?"

"Ay, I remember him," answered Lady Montfort softly. "Mr. Darrell then likes *his* music, still?"

Lionel here uttered an exclamation of more than surprise. He had turned to examine the water-colour sketch—a rustic inn, a honeysuckle arbour, a river in front, a boat yonder—just begun.

"I know the spot!" he cried. "Did you make the sketch of it?"

"I? no; it is hers—my pupil's—my adopted child's."

Lionel's dark eyes turned to Lady Montfort's wistfully, inquiringly; they asked what his lips could not presume to ask. "Your adopted child—what is she?—who?"

As if answering to the eyes, Lady Montfort said—"Wait here a moment; I will go for her."

She left him, descended the stairs into the garden, joined George Morley and his companion; took aside the former, whispered to him, then drawing the arm of the latter within her own, led her back into the room, while George Morley remained in the garden, throwing himself on a bench, and gazing on the stars as they now came forth, fast and frequent, though one by one.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Quem Fors dierum cunque debit
Lucro appone."—HORAT.

LIONEL stood, expectant, in the centre of the room, and as the two female forms entered, the lights were full upon their faces. That younger face—it is she—it is she, the unforgotten—the long lost. Instinctively, as if no years had rolled between—as if she were still the little child, he the boy who had coveted such a sister—he sprang forward and opened his arms, and as suddenly halted, dropped the arms to his side, blushing, confused, abashed. She! that vagrant child!—she! that form so elegant—that great peeress's pupil—adopted daughter, *she* the poor wandering Sophy! She!—impossible!

But her eyes, at first downcast, are now fixed on him. She, too, starts—not forward, but in recoil; she, too, raises her arms, not to open, but to press them to her breast; and she, too, as suddenly checks an impulse, and stands, like him, blushing, confused, abashed.

"Yes," said Caroline Montfort, drawing Sophy nearer to her breast,—"yes, you will both forgive me for the surprise. Yes, you do see before you, grown up to become the pride of those who cherish her, that Sophy who—"

"Sophy!" cried Lionel advancing; "it is so, then! I knew you were no stroller's grandchild."

Sophy drew up—"I am, I am *his* grandchild, and as proud to be so as I was then."

"Pardon me, pardon me; I meant to say that he too was not what he seemed. You forgive me," extending his hand, and Sophy's soft hand fell into his forgivingly.

"But he lives? is well? is here? is—" Sophy burst into tears, and Lady Montfort made a sign to Lionel to go into the garden, and leave them. Reluctantly and dizzily, as one in a dream, he obeyed, leaving the vagrant's grandchild to be soothed in the fostering arms of her whom, an hour or two ago, he knew but by the titles of her rank and the reputation of her pride.

It was not many minutes before Lady Montfort rejoined him.

"You touched unawares," said she, "upon the poor child's most anxious cause of sorrow. Her grandfather, for whom her affection is so sensitively keen, has disap-

peared. I will speak of that later; and if you wish, you shall be taken into our consultations. But—" she paused, looked into his face—open, loyal face, face of gentleman—with heart of man in its eyes, soul of man on its brow;—face formed to look up to the stars which now lighted it—and laying her hand lightly on his shoulder, resumed with hesitating voice—"but I feel like a culprit in asking you what, nevertheless, I must ask, as an imperative condition, if your visits here are to be renewed—if your intimacy here is to be established. And unless you comply with that condition, come no more; we cannot confide in each other."

"Oh, Lady Montfort, impose any condition. I promise beforehand."

"Not beforehand. The condition is this: inviolable secrecy. You will not mention to any one your visits here; your introduction to me; your discovery of the stroller's grandchild in my adopted daughter."

"Not to Mr. Darrell?"

"To him least of all; but this I add, it is for Mr. Darrell's sake that I insist on such concealment; and I trust the concealment will not be long protracted."

"For Mr. Darrell's sake?"

"For the sake of his happiness," cried Lady Montfort, clasping her hands. "My debt to him is larger far than yours; and in thus appealing to you, I scheme to pay back a part of it. Do you trust me?"

"I do, I do."

And from that evening Lionel Haughton became the constant visitor in that house.

Two or three days afterwards Colonel Morley, quitting England for a German Spa at which he annually recruited himself for a few weeks, relieved Lionel from the embarrassment of any questions which that shrewd observer might otherwise have addressed to him. London itself was now empty. Lionel found a quiet lodging in the vicinity of Twickenham. And when his foot passed along the shady lane through yon wicket gate into that region of turf and flowers, he felt as might have felt that famous Minstrel of Ercildoun, when blessed with the privilege to enter Fairyland at will, the Rhymer stole to the grassy hillside, and murmured the spell that unlocks the gates of Oberon.

BOOK VIII.



CHAPTER I.

"A little fire burns up a great deal of corn."—OLD PROVERB.

GUY DARRELL resumed the thread of solitary life at Fawley with a calm which was deeper in its gloom than it had been before. The experiment of return to the social world had failed. The resolutions which had induced the experiment were finally renounced. Five years nearer to death, and the last hope that had flitted across the narrowing passage to the grave, fallen like a faithless torch from his own hand, and trodden out by his own foot.

It was peculiarly in the nature of Darrell to connect his objects with posterity—to regard eminence in the Present but as a beacon-height from which to pass on to the Future the name he had taken from the Past. All his early ambition, sacrificing pleasure to toil, had placed its goal at a distance, remote from the huzzas of bystanders; and Ambition halted now, baffled and despairing. Childless, his line would perish with himself—himself, who had so vaunted its restoration in the land! His genius was childless also—it would leave behind it no offspring of the brain. By toil he had amassed ample wealth; by talent he had achieved a splendid reputation. But the reputation was as perishable as the wealth. Let a half-century pass over his tomb, and nothing would be left to speak of the successful lawyer, the applauded orator, save traditional anecdotes, a laudatory notice in contemporaneous memoirs—perhaps, at most, quotations of eloquent sentences lavished on forgotten cases and obsolete debates—shreds and fragments of a great intellect, which another half-century would sink without a bubble into the depths of Time.* He

* It is so with many a Pollio of the Bar and Senate. Fifty years hence, and how faint upon the page of Hansard will be the vestiges of Follett! No printer's type can record his decorous grace—the persuasion of his silvery tongue. A hundred years hence, may not even Plunkett, weightiest speaker, on his own subject, in the assembly that contained a Canning and a Brougham, be a myth to our grandsons?

had enacted no laws—he had administered no state—he had composed no books. Like the figure on a clock, which adorns the case and has no connection with the movement, he, so prominent an ornament to time, had no part in its works. Removed, the eye would miss him for a while; but a nation's literature or history was the same, whether with him or without. Some with a tithe of his abilities have the luck to fasten their names to things that endure; they have been responsible for measures they did not invent, and which, for good or evil, influence long generations. They have written volumes out of which a couplet of verse, a period in prose, may cling to the rock of ages, as a shell that survives a deluge. But the orator, whose effects are immediate—who enthralls his audience in proportion as he nicks the hour—who, were he speaking like Burke what, apart from the subject matter, closet students would praise, must, like Burke, thin his audience, and exchange present oratorical success for ultimate intellectual renown—a man, in short, whose oratory is emphatically that of the DEBATER is, like an actor, rewarded with a loud applause and a complete oblivion. Waife on the village stage might win applause no less loud, followed by oblivion not more complete.

Darrell was not blind to the brevity of his fame. In his previous seclusion he had been resigned to that conviction —now it saddened him. Then, unconfessed by himself, the idea that he might yet reappear in active life, and do something which the world would not willingly let die, had softened the face of that tranquil Nature from which he must soon now pass out of reach and sight. On the tree of Time he was a leaf already sear upon the bough—not an inscription graven into the rind.

Ever slow to yield to weak regrets—ever seeking to combat his own enemies within—Darrell said to himself one night, while Fairthorn's flute was breathing an air of romance through the melancholy walls, "Is it too late yet to employ this still busy brain upon works that will live when I am dust, and make Posterity supply the heir that fails to my house?"

He shut himself up with immortal authors—he meditated on the choice of a theme; his knowledge was wide, his taste refined;—words!—*he* could not want words! Why should he not write? Alas! why indeed?—He who

has never been a writer in his youth, can no more be a writer in his age than he can be a painter—a musician. What! not write a book? Oh, yes—as he may paint a picture or set a song. But a writer, in the emphatic sense of the word—a writer as Darrell was an orator—oh, no! And, least of all, will he be a writer if he has been an orator by impulse and habit—an orator too happily gifted to require, and too laboriously occupied to resort to, the tedious aids of written preparation—an orator as modern life forms orators—not, of course, an orator like those of the classic world, who elaborated sentences before delivery, and who, after delivery, polished each extemporaneous interlude into rhetorical exactitude and musical perfection. And how narrow the range of compositions to a man burdened already by a grave reputation! He cannot have the self-abandonment—he cannot venture the headlong charge—with which Youth flings the reins to genius, and dashes into the ranks of Fame. Few and austere his themes—fastidious and hesitating his taste. Restricted are the movements of him who walks for the first time into the Forum of Letters with the purple hem on his senatorial toga. Guy Darrell, at his age, entering among authors as a novice!—he, the great lawyer, to whom attorneys would have sent no briefs had he been suspected of coquetting with a muse—he, the great orator who had electrified audiences in proportion to the sudden effects which distinguish oral inspiration from written eloquence—he achieve now, in an art which his whole life had neglected, any success commensurate to his contemporaneous repute;—how unlikely! But a success which should outlive that repute, win the "everlasting inheritance" which could alone have nerved him to adequate effort—how impossible! He could not himself comprehend why, never at a loss for language felicitously apposite or richly ornate when it had but to flow from his thought to his tongue, nor wanting ease, even eloquence, in epistolary correspondence confidentially familiar—he should find words fail ideas, and ideas fail words, the moment his pen became a wand that conjured up the Ghost of the dread Public! The more copious his thoughts, the more embarrassing their selection; the more exquisite his perception of excellence in others, the more timidly frigid his efforts at faultless style. It would be the same with the most skilful author, if the Ghost of

the Public had not long since ceased to haunt him. While he writes, the true author's solitude is absolute or peopled at his will. But take an audience from an orator, what is he? He commands the living public—the Ghost of the Public awes himself.

"Surely once," sighed Darrell, as he gave his blurred pages to the flames—"surely once I had some pittance of the author's talent, and have spent it upon lawsuits!"

The author's talent, no doubt, Guy Darrell once had—the author's temperament never. What is the author's temperament? Too long a task to define. But without it a man may write a clever book, an useful book, a book that may live a year, ten years, fifty years. He will not stand out to distant ages a representative of the age that rather lived in him than he in it. The author's temperament is that which makes him an integral, earnest, original unity, distinct from all before and all that may succeed him. And as a Father of the Church has said that the consciousness of individual being is the sign of immortality, not granted to the inferior creatures—so it is in this individual temperament, one and indivisible, and in the intense conviction of it, more than in all the works it may throw off, that the author becomes immortal. Nay, his works may perish like those of Orpheus or Pythagoras;* but he himself, in his name, in the footprint of his being, remains, like Orpheus or Pythagoras, undestroyed, indestructible.

Resigning literature, the Solitary returned to Science. There he was more at home. He had cultivated science, in his dazzling academical career, with ardour and success; he had renewed the study, on his first retirement to Fawley, as a distraction from tormenting memories or unextinguished passions. He now for the first time regarded the absorbing abstruse occupation as a possible source of fame. To be one in the starry procession of those sons of light who have solved a new law in the statute-book of heaven! Surely a grand ambition, not unbecoming to his years and station, and pleasant in its labours to a man who loved Nature's outward scenery with poetic passion, and had studied her inward mysteries with a sage's minute research. Science needs not the author's art—she rejects its graces—she recoils with a shudder from its fancies. But Science

* It need scarcely be said that the works ascribed to Orpheus or Pythagoras are generally allowed not to be genuine.

requires in the mind of the discoverer a limpid calm. The lightnings that reveal Diespiter must flash in serene skies. No clouds store that thunder—

"Quo bruta tellus, et vaga flumina,
Quo Styx, et invisi horrida Tænari
Sedes, Atlanteusque finis
Concutitur!"

So long as you take science only as a distraction, science will not lead you to discovery. And from some cause or other, Guy Darrell was more unquiet and perturbed in his present than in his past seclusion. Science this time failed even to distract. In the midst of august meditations—of close experiment—some haunting angry thought from the far world passed with rude shadow between Intellect and Truth—the heart eclipsed the mind. The fact is, that Darrell's genius was essentially formed for Action. His was the true orator's temperament, with the qualities that belong to it—the grasp of affairs—the comprehension of men and states—the constructive, administrative faculties. In such career, and in such career alone, could he have developed all his powers, and achieved an imperishable name. Gradually as science lost its interest, he retreated from all his former occupations, and would wander for long hours over the wild unpopulated landscapes round him. As if it were his object to fatigue the body, and in that fatigue tire out the restless brain, he would make his gun the excuse for rambles from sunrise to twilight over the manors he had purchased years ago, lying many miles off from Fawley. There are times when a man who has passed his life in cultivating his mind, finds that the more he can make the physical existence predominate, the more he can lower himself to the rude vigour of his gamekeeper, or his day-labourer—why, the more he can harden his nerves to support the weight of his reflections.

In these rambles he was not always alone. Fairthorn contrived to insinuate himself much more than formerly into his master's habitual companionship. The faithful fellow had so missed Darrell sorely in that long unbroken absence of five years, that on recovering him, Fairthorn seemed resolved to make up for lost time. Departing from his own habits, he would, therefore, lie in wait for Guy Darrell—creeping out of a bramble or bush, like a familiar sprite; and was no longer to be awed away by a

curt syllable or a contracted brow. And Darrell, at first submitting reluctantly, and out of compassionate kindness, to the flute-player's obtrusive society, became by degrees to welcome and relax in it. Fairthorn knew the great secrets of his life. To Fairthorn alone on all earth could he speak without reserve of one name and of one sorrow. Speaking to Fairthorn was like talking to himself, or to his pointers, or to his favourite doe, upon which last he bestowed a new collar, with an inscription that implied more of the true cause that had driven him a second time to the shades of Fawley than he would have let out to Alban Morley or even to Lionel Haughton. Alban was too old for that confidence—Lionel much too young. But the Musician, like Art itself, was of no age; and if ever the gloomy master unbent his outward moodiness and secret spleen in any approach to gaiety, it was in a sort of saturnine playfulness to this grotesque, grown-up infant. They cheered each other, and they teased each other. Stalking side by side over the ridged fallows, Darrell would sometimes pour forth his whole soul, as a poet does to his muse; and at Fairthorn's abrupt interruption or rejoinder, turn round on him with fierce objurgation or withering sarcasm, or what the flute-player abhorred more than all else, a truculent quotation from Horace, which drove Fairthorn away into some vanishing covert or hollow, out of which Darrell had to entice him, sure that, in return, Fairthorn would take a sly occasion to send into his side a vindictive prickle. But as the two came home in the starlight, the dogs dead beat and poor Fairthorn too,—ten to one but what the musician was leaning all his weight on his master's nervous arm, and Darrell was looking with tender kindness in the face of the SOME ONE left to lean upon him still.

One evening, as they were sitting together in the library, the two hermits, each in his corner, and after a long silence, the flute-player said abruptly—

"I have been thinking—"

"Thinking!" quoth Darrell, with his mechanical irony; "I am sorry for you. Try not to do so again."

FAIRTHORN.—"Your poor dear father—"

DARRELL (wincing, startled, and expectant of a prickle). —"Eh? my father—"

FAIRTHORN.—"Was a great antiquary. How it would have pleased him could he have left a fine collection of

antiquities as an heirloom to the nation!—his name thus preserved for ages, and connected with the studies of his life. There are the Elgin Marbles. The parson was talking to me yesterday of a new Vernon Gallery; why not in the British Museum an everlasting Darrell room? Plenty to stock it mouldering yonder in the chambers which you will never finish."

"My dear Dick," said Darrell, starting up, "give me your hand. What a brilliant thought! I could do nothing else to preserve my dear father's name. *Eureka!* You are right. Set the carpenters at work to-morrow. Remove the boards; open the chambers; we will inspect their stores, and select what would worthily furnish 'A Darrell Room.' Perish Guy Darrell the lawyer! Philip Darrell the antiquary at least shall live!"

It is marvellous with what charm Fairthorn's lucky idea seized upon Darrell's mind. The whole of the next day he spent in the forlorn skeleton of the unfinished mansion slowly decaying beside his small and homely dwelling. The pictures, many of which were the rarest originals in early Flemish and Italian art, were dusted with tender care, and hung from hasty nails upon the bare ghastly walls. Delicate ivory carvings, wrought by the matchless hand of Cellini—early Florentine bronzes, priceless specimens of Raffaelle ware and Venetian glass—the precious trifles, in short, which the collector of mediæval curiosities amasses for his heirs to disperse amongst the palaces of kings and the cabinets of nations—were dragged again to unfamiliar light. The invaded sepulchral building seemed a very Pompeii of the *Cinque Cento*. To examine, arrange, methodise, select for national purposes, such miscellaneous treasures would be the work of weeks. For easier access, Darrell caused a slight hasty passage to be thrown over the gap between the two edifices. It ran from the room niched into the gables of the old house, which, originally fitted up for scientific studies, now became his habitual apartment, into the largest of the uncompleted chambers which had been designed for the grand reception-gallery of the new building. Into the pompous gallery thus made contiguous to his monk-like cell, he gradually gathered the choicest specimens of his collection. The damps were expelled by fires on grateless hearthstones; sunshine admitted from windows now for the first time exchanging boards for glass;

rough iron sconces, made at the nearest forge, were thrust into the walls, and sometimes lighted at night—Darrell and Fairthorn walking arm-in-arm along the unpolished floors, in company with Holbein's Nobles, Perugino's Virgins. Some of that highbred company displaced and banished the next day, as repeated inspection made the taste more rigidly exclusive. Darrell had found object, amusement, occupation—frivolous if compared with those lenses, and glasses, and algebraical scrawls which had once whiled lonely hours in the attic-room hard by; but not frivolous even to the judgment of the austerest sage, if that sage had not reasoned away his heart. For here it was not Darrell's taste that was delighted; it was Darrell's heart that, ever hungry, had found food. His heart was connecting those long-neglected memorials of an ambition baffled and relinquished—here with a nation, there with his father's grave! How his eyes sparkled! how his lip smiled! Nobody would have guessed it—none of us know each other; least of all do we know the interior being of those whom we estimate by public repute;—but what a world of simple, fond affection, lay coiled and wasted in that proud man's solitary breast!

CHAPTER II.

The learned compute that seven hundred and seven millions of millions of vibrations have penetrated the eye before the eye can distinguish the tints of a violet. What philosophy can calculate the vibrations of the heart before it can distinguish the colours of love?

While Guy Darrell thus passed his hours within the unfinished fragments of a dwelling builded for posterity, and amongst the still relics of remote generations, Love and Youth were weaving their warm eternal idyll on the sunny lawns by the gliding river.

There they are, Love and Youth, Lionel and Sophy, in the arbour round which her slight hands have twined the honeysuckle, fond imitation of that bower endeared by the memory of her earliest holiday—she seated coyly, he on the ground at her feet, as when Titania had watched his sleep. He has been reading to her, the book has fallen from his hand. What book? That volume of poems so unintelligibly obscure to all but the dreaming young, who

are so unintelligibly obscure to themselves. But to the merit of those poems, I doubt if even George did justice. It is not true, I believe, that they are not durable. Some day or other, when all the jargon so feelingly denounced by Colonel Morley, about "æsthetics," and "objective," and "subjective," has gone to its long home, some critic who can write English will probably bring that poor little volume fairly before the public; and, with all its manifold faults, it will take a place in the affections, not of one single generation of the young, but—everlasting, ever-dreaming, ever-growing youth. But you and I, reader, have no other interest in these poems, except this—that they were written by the brother-in-law of that whimsical, miserly Frank Vance, who perhaps, but for such a brother-in-law, would never have gone through the labour by which he has cultivated the genius that achieved his fame; and if he had not cultivated that genius, he might never have known Lionel; and if he had never known Lionel, Lionel might never perhaps have gone to the Surrey village, in which he saw the Phenomenon: And, to push farther still that Voltaircian philosophy of ifs—if either Lionel or Frank Vance had not been so intimately associated in the minds of Sophy and Lionel with the golden holiday on the beautiful river, Sophy and Lionel might not have thought so much of those poems; and if they had not thought so much of those poems, there might not have been between them that link of poetry without which the love of two young people is a sentiment, always very pretty, it is true, but much too commonplace to deserve special commemoration in a work so uncommonly long as this is likely to be. And thus it is clear that Frank Vance is not a superfluous and episodical personage amongst the characters of this history, but, however indirectly, still essentially, one of those beings without whom the author must have given a very different answer to the question, "What will he do with it?"

Return we to Lionel and Sophy. The poems have brought their hearts nearer and nearer together. And when the book fell from Lionel's hand, Sophy knew that his eyes were on her face, and her own eyes looked away. And the silence was so deep and so sweet! Neither had yet said to the other a word of love. And in that silence both felt that they loved and were beloved. Sophy! how childlike she looked still! How little she is changed!—

except that the soft blue eyes are far more pensive, and that her merry laugh is now never heard. In that luxurious home, fostered with the tenderest care by its charming owner, the romance of her childhood realised, and Lionel by her side, she misses the old crippled vagrant. And therefore it is that her merry laugh is no longer heard! "Ah!" said Lionel, softly breaking the pause at length, "Do not turn your eyes from me, or I shall think that there are tears in them!" Sophy's breast heaved, but her eyes were averted still. Lionel rose gently, and came to the other side of her quiet form. "Fie! there *are* tears, and you would hide them from me. Ungrateful!"

Sophy looked at him now with candid, inexpressible, guileless affection in those swimming eyes, and said with touching sweetness, "Ungrateful! Should I not be so if I were gay and happy?"

And in self-reproach for not being sufficiently unhappy while that young consoler was by her side, she too rose, left the arbour, and looked wistfully along the river. George Morley was expected; he might bring tidings of the absent. And now while Lionel, rejoining her, exerts all his eloquence to allay her anxiety and encourage her hopes, and while they thus, in that divinest stage of love, ere the tongue repeats what the eyes have told, glide along —here in sunlight by lingering flowers—there in shadow under mournful willows, whose leaves are ever the latest to fall, let us explain by what links of circumstance Sophy became the great lady's guest, and Waife once more a homeless wanderer.

CHAPTER III.

Comprising many needful explanations illustrative of wise saws: as for example, "He that hath an ill name is half hanged." "He that hath been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a rope." "He that looks for a star puts out his candles;" and, "When God wills, all winds bring rain."

The reader has been already made aware how, by an impulse of womanhood and humanity, Arabella Crane had been converted from a persecuting into a tutelary agent in the destinies of Waife and Sophy. That revolution in her moral being dated from the evening on which she had sought the cripple's retreat, to warn him of Jasper's designs. We have seen by what stratagem she had made it

appear that Waife and his grandchild had sailed beyond the reach of molestation; with what liberality she had advanced the money that freed Sophy from the manager's claim; and how considerately she had empowered her agent to give the reference which secured to Waife the asylum in which we last beheld him. In a few stern sentences she had acquainted Waife with her fearless inflexible resolve to associate her fate henceforth with the life of his lawless son; and, by rendering abortive all his evil projects of plunder, to compel him at last to depend upon her for an existence neither unsafe nor sordid, provided only that it were not dishonest. The moment that she revealed that design, Waife's trust in her was won. His own heart enabled him to comprehend the effect produced upon a character otherwise unamiable and rugged, by the grandeur of self-immolation and the absorption of one devoted heroic thought. In the strength and bitterness of passion which thus pledged her existence to redeem another's, he obtained the key to her vehement and jealous nature; saw why she had been so cruel to the child of a rival; why she had conceived compassion for that child in proportion as the father's unnatural indifference had quenched the anger of her own self-love; and, above all, why, as the idea of reclaiming and appropriating solely to herself the man who, for good or for evil, had grown into the all-predominant object of her life, gained more and more the mastery over her mind, it expelled the lesser and the baser passions, and the old mean revenge against an infant faded away before the light of that awakening conscience which is often rekindled from ashes by the sparks of a single better and worthier thought. And in the resolute design to reclaim Jasper Losely, Arabella came at once to a ground in common with his father, with his child. Oh what, too, would the old man owe to her, what would be his gratitude, his joy, if she not only guarded his spotless Sophy, but saved from the bottomless abyss his guilty son! Thus when Arabella Crane had, nearly five years before, sought Waife's discovered hiding-place, near the old bloodstained Tower, mutual interests and sympathies had formed between them a bond of alliance not the less strong because rather tacitly acknowledged than openly expressed. Arabella had written to Waife from the Continent, for the first half-year pretty often, and somewhat sanguinely, as to the chance of

Losely's ultimate reformation. Then the intervals of silence became gradually more prolonged, and the letters more brief. But still, whether from the wish not unnecessarily to pain the old man, or, as would be more natural to her character, which, even in its best aspects, was not gentle, from a proud dislike to confess failure, she said nothing of the evil courses which Jasper had renewed. Evidently she was always near him. Evidently, by some means or another, his life, furtive and dark, was ever under the glare of her watchful eyes.

Meanwhile Sophy had been presented to Caroline Montfort. As Waife had so fondly anticipated, the lone childless lady had taken with kindness and interest to the fair motherless child. Left to herself often for months together in the grand forlorn house, Caroline soon found an object to her pensive walks in the basket-maker's cottage. Sophy's charming face and charming ways stole more and more into affections which were denied all nourishment at home. She entered into Waife's desire to improve, by education, so exquisite a nature; and, familiarity growing by degrees, Sophy was at length coaxed up to the great house; and during the hours which Waife devoted to his rambles (for even in his settled industry he could not conquer his vagrant tastes, but would weave his reeds or osiers as he sauntered through solitudes of turf or wood), became the docile delighted pupil in the simple chintz room which Lady Montfort had reclaimed from the desert of her surrounding palace. Lady Montfort was not of a curious turn of mind; profoundly indifferent even to the gossip of drawing-rooms, she had no rankling desire to know the secrets of village hearthstones. Little acquainted even with the great world—scarcely at all with any world below that in which she had her being, save as she approached humble sorrows by delicate charity—the contrast between Waife's calling and his conversation roused in her no vigilant suspicions. A man of some education, and born in a rank that touched upon the order of gentlemen, but of no practical or professional culture—with whimsical tastes—with roving eccentric habits—had, in the course of life, picked up much harmless wisdom, but, perhaps from want of worldly prudence, failed of fortune. Contented with an obscure retreat and a humble livelihood, he might yet naturally be loth to confide to others the painful history of

a descent in life. He might have relations in a higher sphere, whom the confession would shame; he might be silent in the manly pride which shrinks from alms and pity and a tale of fall. Nay, grant the worst—grant that Waife had suffered in repute as well as fortune—grant that his character had been tarnished by some plausible circumstantial evidences which he could not explain away to the satisfaction of friends or the acquittal of a short-sighted world—had there not been, were there not always, many innocent men similarly afflicted? And who could hear Waife talk, or look on his arch smile, and not feel that he was innocent? So, at least, thought Caroline Montfort. Naturally; for if, in her essentially woman-like character, there was one all-pervading and all-predominant attribute, it was PITY. Had Fate placed her under circumstances fitted to ripen into genial development all her exquisite forces of soul, her true post in this life would have been that of the SOOTHER. What a child to some grief-worn father! What a wife to some toiling, aspiring, sensitive man of genius! What a mother to some suffering child! It seemed as if it were necessary to her to have something to compassionate and foster. She was sad when there was no one to comfort; but her smile was like a sunbeam from Eden when it chanced on a sorrow it could brighten away. Out of this very sympathy came her faults—faults of reasoning and judgment. Prudent in her own chilling path through what the world calls temptations, because so ineffably pure—because, to Fashion's light tempters, her very thought was as closed, as

"Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,"

was the ear of Sabrina to the comrades of Comus,—yet place before her some gentle scheme that seemed fraught with a blessing for others, and straightway her fancy embraced it, prudence faded—she saw not the obstacles, weighed not the chances against it. Charity to her did not come alone, but with its sister twins, Hope and Faith.

Thus, benignly for the old man and the fair child, years rolled on till Lord Montfort's sudden death, and his widow was called upon to exchange Montfort Court (which passed to the new heir) for the distant jointure House of Twickenham. By this time she had grown so attached to Sophy, and Sophy so gratefully fond of her, that she proposed to

Waife to take his sweet grandchild as her permanent companion, complete her education, and assure her future. This had been the old man's cherished day-dream; but he had not contemplated its realisation until he himself were in the grave. He turned pale, he staggered, when the proposal which would separate him from his grandchild was first brought before him. But he recovered ere Lady Montfort could be aware of the acuteness of the pang she inflicted, and accepted the generous offer with warm protestations of joy and gratitude. But Sophy! Sophy consent to leave her grandfather afar and aged in his solitary cottage! Little did either of them know Sophy, with her soft heart and determined soul, if they supposed such egotism possible in her. Waife insisted—Waife was angry—Waife was authoritative—Waife was imploring—Waife was pathetic—all in vain! But to close every argument, the girl went boldly to Lady Montfort, and said, "If I left him, his heart would break—never ask it." Lady Montfort kissed Sophy tenderly as mother ever kissed a child for some sweet loving trait of a noble nature, and said simply, "But he shall not be left—he shall come too."

She offered Waife rooms in her Twickenham house—she wished to collect books—he should be librarian. The old man shivered and refused—refused firmly. He had made a vow not to be a guest in any house. Finally, the matter was compromised; Waife would remove to the neighbourhood of Twickenham; there hire a cottage; there ply his art; and Sophy, living with him, should spend a part of each day with Lady Montfort as now.

So it was resolved. Waife consented to occupy a small house on the verge of the grounds belonging to the jointure villa, on the condition of paying rent for it. And George Morley insisted on the privilege of preparing that house for his old teacher's reception, leaving it simple and rustic to outward appearance, but fitting its pleasant chambers with all that his knowledge of the old man's tastes and habits suggested for comfort or humble luxury; a room for Sophy, hung with the prettiest paper, all butterflies and flowers, commanding a view of the river. Waife, despite his proud scruples, could not refuse such gifts from a man whose fortune and career had been secured by his artful lessons. Indeed he had already permitted George to assist, though not largely, his own efforts to repay the

£100 advanced by Mrs. Crane. The years he had devoted to a craft which his ingenuity made lucrative, had just enabled the basket-maker with his pupil's aid, to clear off that debt by instalments. He had the satisfaction of thinking that it was his industry that had replaced the sum to which his grandchild owed her release from the execrable Rugge.

Lady Montfort's departure (which preceded Waife's by some weeks) was more mourned by the poor in her immediate neighbourhood than by the wealthier families who composed what a province calls its society; and the gloom which that event cast over the little village round the kingly mansion, was increased when Waife and his grandchild left.

For the last three years, emboldened by Lady Montfort's protection, and the conviction that he was no longer pursued or spied, the old man had relaxed his earlier reserved and secluded habits. Constitutionally sociable, he had made acquaintance with his humbler neighbours; lounged by their cottage-palings in his rambles down the lanes; diverted their children with Sir Isaac's tricks, or regaled them with nuts and apples from his little orchard; giving to the more diligent labourers many a valuable hint how to eke out the daily wage with garden produce, or bees, or poultry; doctored farmers' cows; and even won the heart of the stud-groom by a mysterious sedative ball, which had reduced to serene docility a highly nervous and hitherto unmanageable four-year-old. Sophy had been no less popular. No one grudged her the favour of Lady Montfort—no one wondered at it. They were loved and honoured. Perhaps the happiest years Waife had known since his young wife left the earth, were passed in the hamlet which he fancied her shade haunted; for was it not there—there, in that cottage—there, in sight of those green osiers, that her first modest virgin replies to his letters of love and hope that soothed his confinement and animated him—till then little fond of sedentary toils—to the very industry which, learned in sport, now gave subsistence, and secured a home. To that home persecution had not come—gossip had not pryed into its calm seclusion—even chance, when threatening disclosure, had seemed to pass by innocuous. For once—a year or so before he left—an incident had occurred which alarmed him at the time, but led to no

annoying results. The banks of the great sheet of water in Montfort Park were occasionally made the scene of rural pic-nics by the families of neighbouring farmers or tradesmen. One day Waife, while carelessly fashioning his baskets on his favourite spot, was recognised, on the opposite margin, by a party of such holiday-makers to whom he himself had paid no attention. He was told the next day by the landlady of the village inn, the main chimney of which he had undertaken to cure of smoking, that a "lady" in the pic-nic symposium of the day before had asked many questions about him and his grandchild, and had seemed pleased to hear they were both so comfortably settled. The "lady" had been accompanied by another "lady," and by two or three young gentlemen. They had arrived in a "buss," which they had hired for the occasion. They had come from Humberston the day after those famous races which annually filled Humberston with strangers—the time of year in which Rugge's grand theatrical exhibition delighted that ancient town. From the description of the two ladies Waife suspected that they belonged to Rugge's company. But they had not claimed Waife as a *ci-devant* comrade; they had not spoken of Sophy as the Phenomenon or the Fugitive. No molestation followed this event; and, after all, the Remorseless Baron had no longer any claim to the Persecuted Bandit or to Juliet Araminta.

But the ex-comedian is gone from the osiers—the hamlet. He is in his new retreat by the lordly river—within an hour of the smoke and roar of tumultuous London. He tries to look cheerful and happy, but his repose is troubled—his heart is anxious. Ever since Sophy, on his account, refused the offer which would have transferred her, not for a few daily hours, but for habitual life, from a basket-maker's roof to all the elegancies and refinements of a sphere in which, if freed from him, her charms and virtues might win her some such alliance as seemed impossible, while he was thus dragging her down to his own level,—ever since that day the old man had said to himself, "I live too long." While Sophy was by his side he appeared busy at his work, and merry in his humour; the moment she left him for Lady Montfort's house, the work dropped from his hands, and he sank into moody thought.

Waife had written to Mrs. Crane (her address then was

at Paris) on removing to Twickenham, and begged her to warn him should Jasper meditate a return to England, by a letter directed to him at the General Post-office, London. Despite his later trust in Mrs. Crane, he did not deem it safe to confide to her Lady Montfort's offer to Sophy, or the affectionate nature of that lady's intimacy with the girl now grown into womanhood. With that insight into the human heart, which was in him not so habitually clear and steadfast as to be always useful, but at times singularly if erratically lucid, he could not feel assured that Arabella Crane's ancient hate to Sophy (which, lessening in proportion to the girl's destitution, had only ceased when the stern woman felt, with a sentiment bordering on revenge, that it was to her that Sophy owed an asylum obscure and humble) might not revive, if she learned that the child of a detested rival was raised above the necessity of her protection, and brought within view of that station so much loftier than her own, from which she had once rejoiced to know that the offspring of a marriage which had darkened her life was excluded. For indeed it had been only on Waife's promise that he would not repeat the attempt that had proved so abortive, to enforce Sophy's claim on Guy Darrell, that Arabella Crane had in the first instance resigned the child to his care. His care—his—an attainted outcast! As long as Arabella Crane could see in Sophy but an object of compassion, she might haughtily protect her; but, could Sophy become an object of envy, would that protection last? No, he did not venture to confide in Mrs. Crane further than to say that he and Sophy had removed from Montfort village to the vicinity of London. Time enough to say more when Mrs. Crane returned to England; and then, not by letter, but in personal interview.

Once a month the old man went to London to inquire at the General Post-office for any communications his correspondent might there address to him. Only once, however, had he heard from Mrs. Crane since the announcement of his migration, and her note of reply was extremely brief, until in the fatal month of June, when Guy Darrell and Jasper Losely had alike returned, and on the same day, to the metropolis; and then the old man received from her a letter which occasioned him profound alarm. It apprised him not only that his terrible son was in England—in London; but that Jasper had discovered that the persons

embarked for America were not the veritable Waife and Sophy, whose names they had assumed. Mrs. Crane ended with these ominous words:—"It is right to say now that he has descended deeper and deeper. Could you see him, you would wonder that I neither abandon him nor my resolve. He hates me worse than the gibbet. To me and not to the gibbet he shall pass—fitting punishment to both. I am in London, not in my old house, but near him. His confidant is my hireling. His life and his projects are clear to my eyes—clear as if he dwelt in glass. Sophy is now of an age in which, were she placed in the care of some person whose respectability could not be impugned, she could not be legally forced away against her will; but if under your roof, those whom Jasper has induced to institute a search, that he has no means to institute very actively himself, might make statements which (as you are already aware) might persuade others, though well-meaning, to assist him in separating her from you. He might publicly face even a police-court, if he thus hoped to shame the rich man into buying off an intolerable scandal. He might, in the first instance, and more probably, decoy her into his power through stealth; and what might become of her before she was recovered? Separate yourself from her for a time. It is you, notwithstanding your arts of disguise, that can be the more easily tracked. She, now almost a woman, will have grown out of recognition. Place her in some secure asylum until, at least, you hear from me again."

Waife read and re-read this epistle (to which there was no direction that enabled him to reply) in the private room of a little coffee-house to which he had retired from the gaze and pressure of the streets. The determination he had long brooded over now began to take shape—to be hurried on to prompt decision. On recovering his first shock, he formed and matured his plans. That same evening he saw Lady Montfort. He felt that the time had come when, for Sophy's sake, he must lift the veil from the obloquy on his own name. To guard against the same concession to Jasper's authority that had betrayed her at Gatesboro', it was necessary that he should explain the mystery of Sophy's parentage and position to Lady Montfort, and go through the anguish of denouncing his own son as the last person to whose hands she should be con-

signed. He approached this subject not only with a sense of profound humiliation, but with no unreasonable fear lest Lady Montfort might at once decline a charge which would possibly subject her retirement to a harassing invasion. But, to his surprise as well as relief, no sooner had he named Sophy's parentage than Lady Montfort evinced emotions of a joy which cast into the shade all more painful or discreditable associations. "Henceforth, believe me," she said, "your Sophy shall be my own child, my own treasured darling!—no humble companion—my equal as well as my charge. Fear not that any one shall tear her from me. You are right in thinking that my roof should be her home—that she should have the rearing and the station which she is entitled as well as fitted to adorn. But you must not part from her. I have listened to your tale; my experience of you supplies the defence you suppress—it reverses the judgment which has aspersed you. And, more ardently than before, I press on you a refuge in the Home that will shelter your grandchild." Noble-hearted woman! and nobler for her ignorance of the practical world, in the proposal which would have blistered with scorching blushes the cheek of that Personification of all "Solemn Plausibilities," the House of Vipont! Gentleman Waife was not scamp enough to profit by the ignorance which sprang from generous virtue. But, repressing all argument, and appearing to acquiesce in the possibility of such an arrangement, he left her benevolent delight unsaddened—and before the morning he was gone. Gone in stealth, and by the starlight, as he had gone years ago from the bailiff's cottage—gone, for Sophy, in waking, to find, as she had found before, farewell lines, that commended hope and forbade grief. "It was," he wrote, "for both their sakes that he had set out on a tour of pleasant adventure. He needed it; he had felt his spirits droop of late in so humdrum and settled a life. And there was danger abroad—danger that his brief absence would remove. He had confided all his secrets to Lady Montfort; she must look on that kind lady as her sole guardian till he return—as return he surely would; and then they would live happy ever afterwards as in fairy tales. He should never forgive her if she were silly enough to fret for him. He should not be alone; Sir Isaac would take care of him. He was not without plenty of money—

savings of several months; if he wanted more, he would apply to George Morley. He would write to her occasionally; but she must not expect frequent letters; he might be away for months—what did that signify? He was old enough to take care of himself; she was no longer a child to cry her eyes out if she lost a senseless toy, or a stupid old cripple. She was a young lady, and he expected to find her a famous scholar when he returned." And so, with all flourish and bravado, and suppressing every attempt at pathos, the old man went his way, and Sophy, hurrying to Lady Montfort's, weeping, distracted, imploring her to send in all directions to discover and bring back the fugitive, was there detained a captive guest. But Waife left a letter also for Lady Montfort, cautioning and adjuring her, as she valued Sophy's safety from the scandal of Jasper's claim, not to make any imprudent attempts to discover him. Such attempt would only create the very publicity from the chance of which he was seeking to escape. The necessity of this caution was so obvious that Lady Montfort could only send her most confidential servant to inquire guardedly in the neighbourhood, until she had summoned George Morley from Humberston, and taken him into counsel. Waife had permitted her to relate to him, on strict promise of secrecy, the tale he had confided to her. George entered with the deepest sympathy into Sophy's distress; but he made her comprehend the indiscretion and peril of any noisy researches. He promised that he himself would spare no pains to ascertain the old man's hiding-place, and see, at least, if he could not be persuaded either to return or suffer her to join him, that he was not left destitute and comfortless. Nor was this an idle promise. George, though his inquiries were unceasing, crippled by the restraint imposed on them, was so acute in divining, and so active in following up each clue to the wanderer's artful doublings, that more than once he had actually come upon the track, and found the very spot where Waife or Sir Isaac had been seen a few days before. Still, up to the day on which Morley had last reported progress, the ingenious ex-actor, fertile in all resources of stratagem and disguise, had baffled his research. At first, however, Waife had greatly relieved the minds of these anxious friends, and cheered even Sophy's heavy heart, by letters, gay though brief. These letters having, by their

postmarks, led to his trace, he had stated, in apparent anger, that reason for discontinuing them. And for the last six weeks no line from him had been received. In fact, the old man, on resolving to consummate his self-abnegation, strove more and more to wean his grandchild's thoughts from his image. He deemed it so essential to her whole future, that, now she had found a home in so secure and so elevated a sphere, she should gradually accustom herself to a new rank of life, from which he was an everlasting exile; should lose all trace of his very being; efface a connection that, ceasing to protect, could henceforth only harm and dishonour her; that he tried, as it were, to blot himself out of the world which now smiled on her. He did not underrate her grief in its first freshness; he knew that, could she learn where he was, all else would be forgotten—she would insist on flying to him. But he continually murmured to himself, "Youth is ever proverbially short of memory; its sorrows poignant, but not enduring; now the wounds are already scarring over—they will not reopen if they are left to heal."

He had, at first, thought of hiding somewhere not so far but that once a-week, or once a-month, he might have stolen into the grounds, looked at the house that held her—left, perhaps, in her walks some little token of himself. But, on reflection, he felt that that luxury would be too imprudent, and it ceased to tempt him in proportion as he reasoned himself into the stern wisdom of avoiding all that could revive her grief for him. At the commencement of this tale, in the outline given of that grand melo-drama in which Juliet Araminta played the part of the Bandit's Child, her efforts to decoy pursuit from the lair of the persecuted Mime were likened to the arts of the skylark to lure eye and hand from the nest of its young. More appropriate that illustration now to the parent-bird than then to the fledgling. Farther and farther from the nest in which all his love was centred fled the old man. What if Jasper did discover him now; that very discovery would mislead the pursuit from Sophy. Most improbable that Losely would ever guess that they could become separated; still more improbable, unless Waife, imprudently lurking near her home, guided conjecture, that Losely should dream of seeking under the roof of the lofty peeress the child that had fled from Mr. Rugge.

Poor old man! his heart was breaking; but his soul was so brightly comforted, that there, where many, many long miles off, I see him standing, desolate and patient, in the corner of yon crowded market-place, holding Sir Isaac by slackened string, with listless hand—Sir Isaac unshorn, travel-stained, draggled, with drooping head and melancholy eyes—yea, as I see him there, jostled by the crowd, to whom, now and then, pointing to that huge pannier on his arm, filled with some homely pedlar wares, he mechanically mutters, "Buy"—yea, I say, verily, as I see him thus, I cannot draw near in pity—I see what the crowd does not—the shadow of an angel's wing over his grey head; and I stand reverentially aloof, with bated breath and bended knee.

CHAPTER IV.

A woman too often reasons from her heart—hence two-thirds of her mistakes and her troubles. A man of genius, too, often reasons from his heart—hence, also, two-thirds of his troubles and mistakes. Wherefore, between woman and genius there is a sympathetic affinity; each has some intuitive comprehension of the secrets of the other, and the more feminin, the woman, the more exquisite the genius, the more subtle the intelligence between the two. But note well that this tacit understanding becomes obscured, if human love pass across its relations. Shakespeare interprets aright the most intricate riddles in woman. A woman was the first to interpret aright the art that is latent in Shakespeare. But did Anne Hathaway and Shakespeare understand each other?

UNOBSERVED by the two young people, Lady Montfort sate watching them as they moved along the river banks. She was seated where Lionel had first seen her—in the kind of grassy chamber that had been won from the foliage and the sward, closed round with interlaced autumnal branches, save where it opened towards the water. If ever woman's brain can conceive and plot a scheme thoroughly pure from one ungentle, selfish thread in its web, in such a scheme had Caroline Montfort brought together those two fair young natures. And yet they were not uppermost in her thoughts as she now gazed on them; nor was it wholly for them that her eyes were filled with tears at once sweet, yet profoundly mournful—holy, and yet intensely human.

Women love to think themselves uncomprehended—nor often without reason in that foible; for man, howsoever sagacious, rarely does entirely comprehend woman, howso-

ever simple. And in this her sex has the advantage over ours. Our hearts are bare to their eyes, even though they can never know what have been our lives. But we may see every action of their lives, guarded and circumscribed in conventional forms, while their hearts will have many mysteries to which we can never have the key. But, in more than the ordinary sense of the word, Caroline Montfort ever had been a woman uncomprehended. Nor even in her own sex did she possess one confidante. Only the outward leaves of that beautiful flower opened to the sunlight. The leaves round the core were gathered fold upon fold closely as when life itself was in the bud.

As all the years of her wedded existence her heart had been denied the natural household vents, so by some strange and unaccountable chance, her intellect also seemed restrained and pent from its proper freedom and play. During those barren years, she had read—she had pondered—she had enjoyed a commune with those whose minds instruct others, and still her own intelligence, which, in early youth, had been characterised by singular vivacity and brightness, and which Time had enriched with every womanly accomplishment, seemed chilled and objectless. It is not enough that a mind should be cultured—it should have movement as well as culture. Caroline Montfort's lay quiescent, like a beautiful form spell-bound to repose, but not to sleep. Looking on her once, as he stood amongst a crowd whom her beauty dazzled, a poet said, abruptly, "Were my guess not a sacrilege to one so spotless and so haughty, I should say that I had hit on the solution of an enigma that long perplexed me; and in the core of that queen of the lilies, could we strip the leaves folded round it, we should find *Remorse*."

Lady Montford started; the shadow of another form than her own fell upon the sward. George Morley stood behind her, his finger on his lips. "Hush," he said in a whisper, "see, Sophy is looking for me up the river. I knew she would be—I stole this way on purpose—for I would speak to you before I face her questions."

"What is the matter? you alarm me," said Lady Montfort, on gaining a part of the grounds more remote from the river, to which George had silently led the way.

"Nay, my dear cousin, there is less cause for alarm than for anxious deliberation, and that upon more matters than

those which directly relate to our poor fugitive. You know that I long shrunk from enlisting the police in aid of our search. I was too sensible of the pain and offence which such an application would occasion Waife—(let us continue so to call him)—and the discovery of it might even induce him to put himself beyond our reach, and quit England. But his prolonged silence, and my fears lest some illness or mishap might have befallen him, together with my serious apprehensions of the effect which unrelieved anxiety might produce on Sophy's health, made me resolve to waive former scruples. Since I last saw you I have applied to one of the higher police-officers accustomed to confidential investigations of a similar nature. The next day he came to tell me that he had learned that a friend of his, who had been formerly a distinguished agent in the detective police, had been engaged for months in tracking a person whom he conjectured to be the same as the one whom I had commissioned him to discover, and with somewhat less caution and delicacy than I had enjoined. The fugitive's real name had been given to this ex-agent—the cause for search, that he had abducted and was concealing his granddaughter from her father. It was easy for me to perceive why this novel search had hitherto failed, no suspicion being entertained that Waife had separated himself from Sophy, and the inquiry being therefore rather directed towards the grandchild than the grandfather. But that inquiry had altogether ceased of late, and for this terrible reason—a different section of the police had fixed its eye upon the father on whose behalf the search had been instituted. This Jasper Losely (ah! our poor friend might well shudder to think Sophy should fall into his hands!) haunts the resorts of the most lawless and formidable desperadoes of London. He appears to be a kind of authority amongst them; but there is no evidence that as yet he has committed himself to any participation in their habitual courses. He lives profusely, for a person in such society (regaling Daredevils, whom he awes by a strength and courage which are described as extraordinary), but without any visible means. It seems that the ex-agent, who had been thus previously employed in Jasper Losely's name, had been engaged, not by Jasper himself, but by a person in very respectable circumstances, whose name I have ascertained to be Poole. And the ex-agent deemed it right.

to acquaint this Mr. Poole with Jasper's evil character and ambiguous mode of life, and to intimate to his employer that it might not be prudent to hold any connection with such a man, and still less proper to assist in restoring a young girl to his care. On this Mr. Poole became so much agitated, and expressed himself so incoherently as to his relations with Jasper, that the ex-agent conceived suspicions against Poole himself, and reported the whole circumstances to one of the chiefs of the former service, through whom they reached the very man whom I myself was employing. But this ex-agent, who had, after his last interview with Poole, declined all farther interference, had since then, through a correspondent in a country town, whom he had employed at the first, obtained a clue to my dear old friend's wanderings, more recent, and I think more hopeful, than any I had yet discovered. You will remember that when questioning Sophy as to any friends in her former life to whom it was probable Waife might have addressed himself, she could think of no one *so* probable as a cobbler named Merle, with whom he and she had once lodged, and of whom he had often spoken to her with much gratitude as having put him in the way of recovering herself, and having shown him a peculiar trustful kindness on that occasion. But you will remember also that I could not find this Merle; he had left the village, near this very place, in which he had spent the greater part of his life—his humble trade having been neglected in consequence of some strange superstitious occupations in which, as he had grown older, he had become more and more absorbed. He had fallen into poverty, his effects had been sold off; he had gone away no one knew whither. Well, the ex-agent, who had also been directed to this Merle by his employer, had, through his correspondent, ascertained that the cobbler was living at Norwich, where he passed under the name of the Wise Man, and where he was in perpetual danger of being sent to the house of correction as an impostor, dealing in astrology, crystal-seeing, and such silly or nefarious practices. Very odd, indeed, and very melancholy, too," quoth the scholar, lifting up his hands and eyes, "that a man so gifted as our poor friend should ever have cultivated an acquaintance with a cobbler who deals in the Black Art!"

"Sophy has talked to me much about that cobbler," said

Lady Montfort, with her sweet half-smile. "It was under his roof that she first saw Lionel Haughton. But though the poor man may be an ignorant enthusiast, he is certainly, by her account, too kind and simple-hearted to be a designing impostor."

GEORGE.—"Possibly. But to go on with my story: A few weeks ago, an elderly lame man, accompanied by a dog, who was evidently poor dear Sir Isaac, lodged two days with Merle at Norwich. On hearing this, I myself went yesterday to Norwich, saw and talked to Merle, and through this man I hope, more easily, delicately, and expeditiously than by any other means, to achieve our object. He evidently can assist us, and, as evidently, Waife has not told him that he is flying from Sophy and friends, but from enemies and persecutors. For Merle, who is impervious to bribes, and who at first was churlish and rude, became softened as my honest affection for the fugitive grew clear to him, and still more when I told him how wretched Sophy was at her grandfather's disappearance, and that she might fret herself into a decline. And we parted with this promise on his side, that if I would bring down to him either Sophy herself (which is out of the question), or a line from her, which, in referring to any circumstances while under his roof that could only be known to her and himself, should convince him that the letter was from her hand, assuring him that it was for Waife's benefit and at her prayer that he should bestir himself in the search for her grandfather, and that he might implicitly trust to me, he would do all he could to help us. So far, then, so good. But I have now more to say, and that is in reference to Sophy herself. While we are tracking her grandfather, the peril to her is not lessened. Never was that peril thoroughly brought before my eyes until I had heard actually from the police agent the dreadful character and associations of the man who can claim her in a father's name. Waife, it is true, had told you that his son was profligate, spendthrift, lawless—sought her, not from natural affection, but as an instrument to be used, roughly and coarsely, for the purpose of extorting money from Mr. Darrell. But this stops far short of the terrible reality. Imagine the effect on her nerves, so depressed as they now are, nay, on her very life, should this audacious miscreant force himself here and.

say, 'Come with me, you are my child.' And are we quite sure that out of some refining nobleness of conscience she might not imagine it her duty to obey, and to follow him? The more abject and friendless his condition, the more she might deem it her duty to be by his side. I have studied her from her childhood. She is capable of any error in judgment, if it be made to appear a martyr's devoted self-sacrifice. You may well shudder, my dear cousin. But grant that she were swayed by us and by the argument that so to act would betray and kill her beloved grandfather, still, in resisting this ruffian's paternal authority, what violent and painful scenes might ensue! What dreadful publicity to be attached for ever to her name! Nor is this all. Grant that her father does not discover her, but that he is led by his associates into some criminal offence, and suffers by the law—her relationship, both to him from whom you would guard her, and to him whose hearth you have so tenderly reared her to grace, suddenly dragged to day—would not the shame kill her? And in that disclosure how keen would be the anguish of Darrell!"

"Oh, heavens!" cried Caroline Montfort, white as ashes, and wringing her hands, "you freeze me with terror. But this man cannot be so fallen as you describe. I have seen him—spoken with him in his youth—hoped then to assist in a task of conciliation, pardon. Nothing about him then foreboded so fearful a corruption. He might be vain, extravagant, selfish, false—Ah, yes! he was false indeed! but still the ruffian you paint, banded with common criminals, cannot be the same as the gay, dainty, perfumed, fair-faced adventurer with whom my ill-fated playmate fled her father's house. You shake your head—what is it you advise?"

"To expedite your own project—to make at once the resolute attempt to secure to this poor child her best, her most rightful protector—to let whatever can be done to guard her from danger, or reclaim her father from courses to which despair may be driving him—to let, I say, all this be done by the person whose interest in doing it effectively is so paramount—whose ability to judge of and decide on the wisest means is so immeasurably superior to all that lies within our own limited experience of life."

"But you forget that our friend told me that he had appealed to—to Mr. Darrell on his return to England:

that Mr. Darrell had peremptorily refused to credit the claim; and had sternly said that, even if Sophy's birth could be proved, he would not place under his father's roof the grandchild of William Losely."

"True; and yet you hoped reasonably enough to succeed where he, poor outcast, had failed."

"Yes, yes; I did hope that Sophy—her manners formed, her education completed—all her natural exquisite graces so cultured and refined, as to justify pride in the proudest kindred—I did hope that she should be brought, as it were by accident, under his notice; that she would interest and charm him; and that the claim, when made, might thus be welcomed with delight. Mr. Darrell's abrupt return to a seclusion so rigid forbids the opportunity that might easily have been found or made if he had remained in London. But suddenly, violently to renew a claim that such a man has rejected, before he has ever seen that dear child—before his heart and his taste plead for her—who would dare to do it? or, if so daring, who could hope success?"

"My dear Lady Montfort, my noble cousin, with repute as spotless as the ermine of your robe—who but you?"

"Who but I? Any one. Mr. Darrell would not even read through a letter addressed to him by me."

George stared with astonishment. Caroline's face was downcast—her attitude that of profound humiliated dejection.

"Incredible!" said he at length. "I have always suspected, and so indeed has my uncle, that Darrell had some cause of complaint against your mother. Perhaps he might have supposed that she had not sufficiently watched over his daughter, or had not sufficiently inquired into the character of the governess whom she recommended to him; and that this had led to an estrangement between Darrell and your mother, which could not fail to extend somewhat to yourself. But such misunderstandings can surely now be easily removed. Talk of his not reading a letter addressed to him by you! Why, do I not remember, when I was on a visit to my schoolfellow, his son, what influence you, a mere child yourself, had over that grave, busy man, then in the height of his career—how you alone could run without awe into his study—how you alone had the privilege to arrange his books, sort his papers—so that we two.

boys looked on you with a solemn respect, as the depositary of all his state secrets—how vainly you tried to decoy that poor timid Matilda, his daughter, into a share of your own audacity!—Is not all this true?"

"O yes, yes—old days gone for ever!"

"Do I not remember how you promised that, before I went back to school, I should hear Darrell read aloud—how you brought the volume of Milton to him in the evening—how he said, 'No, to-morrow night; I must go now to the House of Commons'—how I marvelled to hear you answer boldly, 'To-morrow night George will have left us, and I have promised that he shall hear you read'—and how, looking at you under those dark brows with serious softness, he said, 'Right: promises once given, must be kept. But was it not rash to promise in another's name?'—and you answered, half gently, half pettishly, 'As if *you* could fail me!' He took the book without another word, and read. What reading it was too! And do you not remember another time, how—"

LADY MONTFORT (interrupting with nervous impatience).—"Ay, ay—I need no reminding of all—all! Kindest, noblest, gentlest friend to a giddy, heedless child, unable to appreciate the blessing. But now, George, I dare not, I cannot write to Mr. Darrell."

George mused a moment, and conjectured that Lady Montfort had, in the inconsiderate, impulsive season of youth, aided in the clandestine marriage of Darrell's daughter, and had become thus associated in his mind with the affliction that had embittered his existence. Were this so, certainly she would not be the fitting intercessor on behalf of Sophy. His thoughts then turned to his uncle, Darrell's earliest friend, not suspecting that Colonel Morley was actually the person whom Darrell had already appointed his adviser and representative, in all transactions that might concern the very parties under discussion. But just as he was about to suggest the expediency of writing to Alban to return to England, and taking him into confidence and consultation, Lady Montfort resumed, in a calmer voice and with a less troubled countenance—

"Who should be the pleader for one whose claim, if acknowledged, would affect his own fortunes, but Lionel Haughton?—Hold!—look where yonder they come into sight—there by the gap in the evergreens. May we not

hope that Providence, bringing those two beautiful lives together, gives a solution to the difficulties which thwart our action and embarrass our judgment? I conceived and planned a blissful romance the first moment I gathered from Sophy's artless confidences the effect that had been produced on her whole train of thought and feeling by the first meeting with Lionel in her childhood; by his brotherly, chivalrous kindness, and, above all, by the chance words he let fall, which discontented her with a life of shift and disguise, and revealed to her the instincts of her own honest truthful nature. An alliance between Lionel Haughton and Sophy seemed to me the happiest possible event that could befall Guy Darrell. The two branches of his family united—a painful household secret confined to the circle of his own kindred—granting Sophy's claim never perfectly cleared up, but subject to a tormenting doubt—her future equally assured—her possible rights equally established—Darrell's conscience and pride reconciled to each other. And how, even but as wife to his young kinsman, he would learn to love one so exquisitely endearing!" [Lady Montfort paused a moment, and then resumed.] "When I heard that Mr. Darrell was about to marry again, my project was necessarily arrested."

"Certainly," said George, "if he formed new ties, Sophy would be less an object in his existence, whether or not he recognised her birth. The alliance between her and Lionel would lose many of its advantages; and any address to him on Sophy's behalf would become yet more ungraciously received."

Lady Montfort.—"In that case I had resolved to adopt Sophy as my own child; lay by from my abundant income an ample dowry for her; and whether Mr. Darrell ever know it or not, at least I should have the secret joy to think that I was saving him from the risk of remorse hereafter—should she be, as we believe, his daughter's child, and have been thrown upon the world destitute;—yes, the secret joy of feeling that I was sheltering, fostering as a mother, one whose rightful home might be with him who in my childhood sheltered, fostered me!"

George (much affected).—"How, in proportion as we know you, the beauty which you veil from the world outshines that which you cannot prevent the world from seeing! But you must not let this grateful enthusiasm

blind your better judgment. You think these young persons are beginning to be really attached to each other. Then it is the more necessary that no time should be lost in learning how Mr. Darrell would regard such a marriage. I do not feel so assured of his consent as you appear to do. At all events, this should be ascertained before their happiness is seriously involved. I agree with you that Lionel is the best intermediator to plead for Sophy; and his very generosity in urging her prior claim to a fortune that might otherwise pass to him, is likely to have weight with a man so generous himself as Guy Darrell is held to be. But does Lionel yet know all? Have you yet ventured to confide to him, or even to Sophy herself, the nature of her claim on the man who so proudly denies it?"

"No—I deemed it due to Sophy's pride of sex to imply to her that she would, in fortune and in social position, be entitled to equality with those whom she might meet here. And that is true, if only as the child whom I adopt and enrich. I have not said more. And only since Lionel has appeared has she ever seemed interested in anything that relates to her parentage. From the recollection of her father she naturally shrinks—she never mentions his name. But two days ago she did ask timidly, and with great change of countenance, if it was through her mother that she was entitled to a rank higher than she had hitherto known; and when I answered 'yes,' she sighed, and said, 'But my dear grandfather never spoke to me of her; he never even saw my mother.'"

GEORGE.—"And you, I suspect, do not much like to talk of that mother. I have gathered from you unawares to yourself, that she was not a person you could highly praise; and to me, as a boy, she seemed, with all her timidity, wayward and deceitful."

LADY MONTFORT.—"Alas! how bitterly she must have suffered—and how young she was. But you are right; I cannot speak to Sophy of her mother, the subject is connected with so much sorrow. But I told her 'that she should know all soon,' and she said, with a sweet and melancholy patience, 'When my poor grandfather will be by to hear; I can wait.'"

GEORGE.—"But is Lionel, with his quick intellect and busy imagination, equally patient? Does he not guess at the truth? You have told him that you do meditate a

project which affects Guy Darrell, and required his promise not to divulge to Darrell his visits in this house."

LADY MONTFORT.—" He knows that Sophy's paternal grandfather was William Losely. From your uncle he heard William Losely's story, and—"

GEORGE.—" My uncle Alban ?"

LADY MONTFORT.—" Yes; the Colonel was well acquainted with the elder Losely in former days, and spoke of him to Lionel with great affection. It seems that Lionel's father knew him also, and thoughtlessly involved him in his own pecuniary difficulties. Lionel was not long a visitor here before he asked me abruptly if Mr. Waife's real name was not Losely. I was obliged to own it, begging him not at present to question me further. He said, then, with much emotion, that he had an hereditary debt to discharge to William Losely, and that he was the last person who ought to relinquish belief in the old man's innocence of the crime for which the law had condemned him, or to judge him harshly if the innocence were not substantiated. You remember with what eagerness he joined in your search, until you positively forbade his interposition, fearing that should our poor friend hear of inquiries instituted by one whom he could not recognise as a friend, and might possibly consider an emissary of his son's, he would take yet greater pains to conceal himself. But from the moment that Lionel learned that Sophy's grandfather was William Losely, his manner to Sophy became yet more tenderly respectful. He has a glorious nature, that young man! But did your uncle never speak to you of William Losely ?"

"No. I am not surprised at that. My uncle Alban avoids 'painful subjects.' I am only surprised that he should have revived a painful subject in talk to Lionel. But I now understand why, when Waife first heard my name, he seemed affected, and why he so specially enjoined me never to mention or describe him to my friends and relations. Then Lionel knows Losely's story, but not his son's connection with Darrell ?"

" Certainly not. He knows but what is generally said in the world, that Darrell's daughter eloped with a Mr. Hammond, a man of inferior birth, and died abroad, leaving but one child, who is also dead. Still Lionel does suspect,—my very injunctions of secresy must make him

more than suspect, that the Loselys are somehow or other mixed up with Darrell's family history. Hush! I hear his voice yonder—they approach."

"My dear cousin, let it be settled between us, then, that you frankly and without delay communicate to Lionel the whole truth, so far as it is known to us, and put it to him how best and most touchingly to move Mr. Darrell towards her, of whom we hold him to be the natural protector. I will write to my uncle to return to England that he may assist us in the same good work. Meanwhile, I shall have only good tidings to communicate to Sophy in my new hopes to discover her grandfather through Merle."

Here, as the sun was setting, Lionel and Sophy came in sight;—above their heads, the western clouds bathed in gold and purple. Sophy, perceiving George, bounded forwards, and reached his side, breathless.

CHAPTER V.

Lionel Haughton having lost his heart, it is no longer a question what HE will do with it. But what will be done with it is a very grave question indeed.

LIONEL forestalled Lady Montfort in the delicate and embarrassing subject which her cousin had urged her to open. For while George, leading away Sophy, informed her of his journey to Norwich, and his interview with Merle, Lionel drew Lady Montfort into the house, and with much agitation, and in abrupt hurried accents, implored her to withdraw the promise which forbade him to inform his benefactor how and where his time had been spent of late. He burst forth with a declaration of that love with which Sophy had inspired him, and which Lady Mortfort could not be but prepared to hear. "Nothing," said he, "but a respect for her more than filial anxiety at this moment could have kept my heart thus long silent. But that heart is so deeply pledged—so utterly hers—that it has grown an ingratitude, a disrespect to my generous kinsman, to conceal from him any longer the feelings which must colour my whole future existence. Nor can I say to her, 'Can you return my affection?—will you listen to my vows?—will you accept them at the altar?'—until I have

won, as I am sure to win, the approving consent of my more than father."

"You feel sure to win that consent, in spite of the stain on her grandfather's name?"

"When Darrell learns that, but for my poor father's fault, that name might be spotless now!—yes! I am not Mr. Darrell's son—the transmitter of his line. I believe yet that he will form new ties. By my mother's side I have no ancestors to boast of; and you have owned to me that Sophy's mother was of gentle birth. Alban Morley told me, when I last saw him, that Darrell wishes me to marry, and leaves me free to choose my bride. Yes; I have no doubt of Mr. Darrell's consent. My dear mother will welcome to her heart the prize so coveted by mine; and Charles Haughton's son will have a place at his hearth for the old age of William Losely. Withdraw your interdict at once, dearest Lady Montfort, and confide to me all that you have hitherto left unexplained, but have promised to reveal when the time came. The time has come."

"It has come," said Lady Montfort, solemnly; "and Heaven grant that it may bear the blessed results which were in my thoughts when I took Sophy as my own adopted daughter, and hailed in yourself the reconciler of conflicting circumstance. Not under this roof should you woo William Losely's grandchild. Doubly are you bound to ask Guy Darrell's consent and blessing. At his hearth woo your Sophy—at his hands ask a bride in his daughter's child."

And to her wondering listener, Caroline Montfort told her grounds for the belief that connected the last of the Darrells with the convict's grandchild.

CHAPTER VI.

Credulous crystal-seers, young lovers, and grave wise men—all in the same category.

George Morley set out the next day for Norwich, in which antique city, ever since the Dane peopled it, some wizard or witch, star-reader, or crystal-seer has enjoyed a mysterious renown, perpetuating thus through all change in our land's social progress the long line of Vala and Saga, who came with the Raven and Valkyr from Scandi-

navian pine shores. Merle's reserve vanished on the perusal of Sophy's letter to him. He informed George that Waife declared he had plenty of money, and had even forced a loan upon Merle; but that he liked an active, wandering life; it kept him from thinking, and that a pedlar's pack would give him a licence for vagrancy, and a budget to defray its expenses; that Merle had been consulted by him in the choice of light popular wares, and as to the route he might find the most free from competing rivals. Merle willingly agreed to accompany George in quest of the wanderer, whom, by the help of his crystal, he seemed calmly sure he could track and discover. Accordingly, they both set out in the somewhat devious and desultory road which Merle, who had some old acquaintances amongst the ancient profession of hawkers, had advised Waife to take. But Merle, unhappily confiding more in his crystal than Waife's steady adherence to the chart prescribed, led the Oxford scholar the life of a will-of-the-wisp; zigzag, and shooting to and fro, here and there, till, just when George had lost all patience, Merle chanced to see, not in the crystal, a *pelerine* on the neck of a farmer's daughter, which he was morally certain he had himself selected for Waife's pannier. And the girl, stating in reply to his inquiry that her father had bought that *pelerine* as a present for her, not many days before, of a pedlar in a neighbouring town, to the market of which the farmer resorted weekly, Merle cast an horary scheme, and finding the Third House (of short journeys) in favourable aspect to the Seventh House (containing the object desired), and in conjunction with the Eleventh House (friends) he gravely informed the scholar that their toils were at an end, and that the Hour and the Man were at hand. Not over sanguine, George consigned himself and the seer to an early train, and reached the famous town of Ouzelford, whither, when the chronological order of our narrative (which we have so far somewhat forestalled) will permit, we shall conduct the inquisitive reader.

Meanwhile Lionel, subscribing without a murmur to Lady Montfort's injunction to see Sophy no more till Darrell had been conferred with and his consent won, returned to his lodgings in London, sanguine of success, and flushed with joy. His intention was to set out at once to Fawley; but on reaching town, he found there a few

lines from Darrell himself, in reply to a long and affectionate letter which Lionel had written a few days before, asking permission to visit the old manor-house; for amidst all his absorbing love for Sophy, the image of his lonely benefactor in that gloomy hermitage often rose before him. In these lines, Darrell, not unkindly, but very peremptorily, declined Lionel's overtures. "In truth, my dear young kinsman," wrote the recluse—"in truth I am, with slowness, and with frequent relapses, labouring through convalescence from a moral fever. My nerves are yet unstrung. I am as one to whom is prescribed the most complete repose;—the visits, even of friends the dearest, forbidden as a perilous excitement. The sight of you—of any one from the great world—but especially of one whose rich vitality of youth and hope affronts and mocks my own fatigued exhaustion, would but irritate, unsettle, torture me. When I am quite well I will ask you to come. I shall enjoy your visit. Till then, on no account, and on no pretext, let my morbid ear catch the sound of your footfall on my quiet floor. Write to me often, but tell me nothing of the news and gossip of the world. Tell me only of yourself, your studies, your thoughts, your sentiments, your wishes. Nor forget my injunctions. Marry young, marry for love; let no ambition of power, no greed of gold, ever mislead you into giving to your life a companion who is not the half of your soul. Choose with the heart of a man; I know that you will choose with the self-esteem of a gentleman; and be assured beforehand of the sympathy and sanction of your

"CHURLISH BUT LOVING KINSMAN."

After this letter, Lionel felt that, at all events, he could not at once proceed to the old manor-house in defiance of its owner's prohibition. He wrote briefly, entreating Darrell to forgive him if he persisted in the prayer to be received at Fawley, stating that his desire for a personal interview was now suddenly become special and urgent; that it not only concerned himself, but affected his benefactor. By return of post Darrell replied with curt frigidity, repeating, with even sternness, his refusal to receive Lionel, but professing himself ready to attend to all that his kinsman might address to him by letter. "If it be as you state," wrote Darrell, with his habitual irony, "a

matter that relates to myself, I claim, as a lawyer for my own affairs—the precaution I once enjoined to my clients—a written brief should always precede a personal consultation."

In fact, the proud man suspected that Lionel had been directly or indirectly addressed on behalf of Jasper Losely; and certainly that was the last subject on which he would have granted an interview to his young kinsman. Lionel, however, was not perhaps sorry to be thus compelled to trust to writing his own and Sophy's cause. Darrell was one of those men whose presence inspires a certain awe—one of those men whom we feel, upon great occasions, less embarrassed to address by letter than in person. Lionel's pen moved rapidly—his whole heart and soul suffused with feeling; and, rushing over the page, he reminded Darrell of the day when he had told to the rich man the tale of the lovely wandering child, and how, out of his sympathy for that child, Darrell's approving, fostering tenderness to himself had grown. Thus indirectly to her forlorn condition had he owed the rise in his own fortunes. He went through the story of William Losely as he had gathered it from Alban Morley, and touched pathetically on his own father's share in that dark history. If William Losely really was hurried into crime by the tempting necessity for a comparatively trifling sum, but for Charles Haughton, would the necessity have arisen? Eloquently then the lover united grandfather and grandchild in one touching picture—their love for each other, their dependence on each other. He enlarged on Sophy's charming, unselfish, simple, noble character; he told how he had again found her; he dwelt on the refining accomplishments she owed to Lady Montfort's care. How came she with Lady Montfort? Why had Lady Montfort cherished, adopted her? Because Lady Montfort told him how much her own childhood had owed to Darrell; because, should Sophy be, as alleged, the offspring of his daughter, the heiress of his line, Caroline Montfort rejoiced to guard her from danger, save her from poverty, and ultimately thus to fit her to be not only acknowledged with delight, but with pride. Why had he been enjoined not to divulge to Darrell that he had again found, and under Lady Montfort's roof, the child whom, while yet unconscious of her claims, Darrell himself had vainly sought to find, and

benevolently designed to succour? Because Lady Montfort wished to fulfil her task—complete Sophy's education, interrupted by grief for her missing grandfather, and obtain indeed, when William Losely again returned, some proofs (if such existed) to corroborate the assertion of Sophy's parentage. "And," added Lionel, "Lady Montfort seems to fear that she has given you some cause of displeasure—what I know not, but which might have induced you to disapprove of the acquaintance I had begun with her. Be that as it may, would you could hear the reverence with which she ever alludes to your worth—the gratitude with which she attests her mother's and her own early obligations to your intellect and heart!" Finally, Lionel wove all his threads of recital into the confession of the deep love into which his romantic memories of Sophy's wandering childhood had been ripened by the sight of her graceful, cultured youth. "Grant," he said, "that her father's tale be false—and no doubt you have sufficient reasons to discredit it—still, if you cannot love her as your daughter's child, receive, know her, I implore—let her love and revere you—as my wife! Leave me to protect her from a lawless father—leave me to redeem, by some deeds of loyalty and honour, any stain that her grandsire's sentence may seem to fix upon our union. Oh! if ambitious before, how ambitious I should be now—to efface for her sake as for mine, her grandsire's shame, my father's errors! But if, on the other hand, she should, on the requisite inquiries, be proved to descend from your ancestry—your father's blood in her pure veins—I know, alas! then that I should have no right to aspire to such nuptials. Who would even think of her descent from a William Losely? Who would not be too proud to remember only her descent from you? All spots would vanish in the splendour of your renown; the highest in the land would court her alliance. And I am but the pensioner of your bounty, and only on my father's side of gentle origin. But still I think you would not reject me—you would place the future to my credit; and I would wait, wait patiently, till I had won such a soldier's name as would entitle me to mate with a daughter of the Darrells."

Sheet upon sheet the young eloquence flowed on—seeking, with an art of which the writer was unconscious, all the arguments and points of view which might be the most

captivating to the superb pride or to the exquisite tenderness which seemed to Lionel the ruling elements of Darrell's character.

He had not to wait long for a reply. At the first glance of the address on its cover, his mind misgave him; the hopes that had hitherto elated his spirit yielded to abrupt forebodings. Darrell's hand-writing was habitually in harmony with the intonations of his voice—singularly clear, formed with a peculiar and original elegance, yet with the undulating ease of a natural, candid, impulsive character. And that decorous care in such mere trifles as the very sealing of a letter, which, neglected by musing poets and abstracted authors, is observable in men of high public station, was in Guy Darrell significant of the Patrician dignity that imparted a certain stateliness to his most ordinary actions.

But in the letter which lay in Lionel's hand the writer was scarcely recognisable—the direction blurred, the characters dashed off from a pen fierce yet tremulous; the seal a great blotch of wax; the device of the heron, with its soaring motto, indistinct and mangled, as if the stamping instrument had been plucked wrathfully away before the wax had cooled. And when Lionel opened the letter, the hand-writing within was yet more indicative of mental disorder. The very ink looked menacing and angry—blacker as the pen had been forcibly driven into the page.

"Unhappy boy!" began the ominous epistle, "is it through you that the false and detested woman who has withered up the noon-day of my life, seeks to dishonour its blighted close? Talk not to me of Lady Montfort's gratitude and reverence! Talk not to me of her amiable, tender, holy aim, to obtrude upon my childless house the granddaughter of a convicted felon! Show her these lines, and ask her by what knowledge of my nature she can assume that ignominy to my name would be a blessing to my hearth? Ask her, indeed, how she can dare to force herself still upon my thoughts—dare to imagine she can lay me under obligations—dare to think she can be a something still in my forlorn existence! Lionel Haughton, I command you in the name of all the dead whom we can claim as ancestors in common, to tear from your heart as you would tear a thought of disgrace, this image which has bewitched your reason. My daughter, thank Heaven, left

no pledge of an execrable union. But a girl who has been brought up by a thief—a girl whom a wretch so lost to honour as Jasper Losely sought to make an instrument of fraud to my harassment and disgrace, be her virtues and beauty what they may, I could not, without intolerable anguish, contemplate as the wife of Lionel Haughton. But *receive* her as your wife! Admit her within these walls! Never, never; I scorn to threaten you with loss of favour, loss of fortune. Marry her if you will. You shall have an ample income secured to you. But from that moment our lives are separated—our relation ceases. You will never again see nor address me. But oh, Lionel, can you—can you inflict upon me this crowning sorrow? Can you, for the sake of a girl of whom you have seen but little, or in the Quixotism of atonement for your father's fault, complete the ingratitude I have experienced from those who owed me most? I cannot think it. I rejoice that you wrote—did not urge this suit in person. I should not have been able to control my passion; we might have parted foes. As it is, I restrain myself with difficulty! That woman, that child, associated thus to tear from me the last affection left to my ruined heart. No! You will not be so cruel! Send this, I command you, to Lady Montfort. See again neither her nor the impostor she has been cherishing for my disgrace. This letter will be your excuse to break off with both—with both.

"GUY DARRELL."

Lionel was stunned. Not for several hours could he recover self-possession enough to analyse his own emotions, or discern the sole course that lay before him. After such a letter, from such a benefactor, no option was left to him. Sophy must be resigned; but the sacrifice crushed him to the earth—crushed the very manhood out of him. He threw himself on the floor, sobbing,—sobbing as if body and soul were torn, each from each, in convulsive spasms.

But send this letter to Lady Montfort? A letter so wholly at variance with Darrell's dignity of character—a letter in which rage seemed lashed to unreasoning frenzy. Such bitter language of hate and scorn, and even insult to a woman, and to the very woman who had seemed to Lionel so reverently to cherish the writer's name—so tenderly to scheme for the writer's happiness! Could he

obey a command that seemed to lower Darrell even more than it could humble her to whom it was sent?

Yet disobey! What but the letter itself could explain? Ah—and was there not some strange misunderstanding with respect to Lady Montfort, which the letter itself, and nothing but the letter, would enable her to dispel; and if dispelled, might not Darrell's whole mind undergo a change? A flash of joy suddenly broke on his agitated, tempestuous thoughts. He forced himself again to read those blotted impetuous lines. Evidently—evidently, while writing to Lionel—the subject Sophy—the man's wrathful heart had been addressing itself to neither. A suspicion seized him; with that suspicion, hope. He would send the letter, and with but few words from himself—words that revealed his immense despair at the thought of relinquishing Sophy—intimated his belief that Darrell here was, from some error of judgment which Lionel could not comprehend, avenging himself on Lady Montfort; and closed with his prayer to her, if so, to forgive lines coloured by hasty passion, and, for the sake of all, not to disdain that self-vindication which might perhaps yet soften a nature possessed of such depths of sweetness as that which appeared now so cruel and so bitter. He would not yet despond—not yet commission her to give his last farewell to Sophy.

CHAPTER VII.

The man-eater continues to take his quiet steak out of Dolly Poole, and is in turn subjected to the anatomical knife of the dissecting Author. Two traps are laid for him—one by his fellow man-eaters—one by that deadly persecutrix, the woman who tries to save him in spite of all he can do to be hanged.

MEANWHILE the unhappy Adolphus Poole had been the reluctant but unfailing source from which Jasper Losely had weekly drawn the supplies to his worthless and workless existence. Never was a man more constrainedly benevolent, and less recompensed for pecuniary sacrifice by applauding conscience, than the doomed inhabitant of Alhambra Villa. In the utter failure of his attempts to discover Sophy, or to induce Jasper to accept Colonel Morley's proposals, he saw this parasital monster fixed upon his entrails, like the vulture on those of the classic sufferer in mythological tales. Jasper, indeed, had accom-

modated himself to this regular and unlaborious mode of gaining "*sa pauvre vie*." To call once a-week upon his old acquaintance, frighten him with a few threats, or force a deathlike smile from agonising lips by a few villanous jokes, carry off his four sovereigns, and enjoy himself thereon till pay-day duly returned, was a condition of things that Jasper did not greatly care to improve; and truly had he said to Poole that his earlier energy had left him. As a sensualist of Jasper's stamp grows older and falls lower, indolence gradually usurps the place once occupied by vanity or ambition. Jasper was bitterly aware that his old comeliness was gone; that never more could he ensare a maiden's heart or a widow's gold. And when this truth was fully brought home to him, it made a strange revolution in all his habits. He cared no longer for dress and gew-gaws—sought rather to hide himself than to parade. In the neglect of the person he had once so idolised—in the coarse roughness which now characterised his exterior—there was that sullen despair which the vain only know when what had made them dainty and jocund is gone for ever. The human mind, in deteriorating, fits itself to the sphere into which it declines. Jasper would not now, if he could, have driven a cabriolet down St. James's Street. He had taken more and more to the vice of drinking as the excitement of gambling was withdrawn from him. For how gamble with those who had nothing to lose, and to whom he himself would have been pigeon, not hawk? And as he found that, on what he thus drew regularly from Dolly Poole, he could command all the comforts that his embruted tastes now desired, so an odd kind of prudence for the first time in his life came with what he chose to consider "a settled income." He mixed with ruffians in their nightly orgies; treated them to cheap potations; swaggered, bullied, boasted, but shared in no project of theirs which might bring into jeopardy the life which Dolly Poole rendered so comfortable and secure. His energies, once so restless, were lulled, partly by habitual intoxication, partly by the physical pains which had nestled themselves into his robust fibres, efforts of an immense and still tenacious vitality to throw off diseases repugnant to its native magnificence of health. The finest constitutions are those which, when once seriously impaired, occasion the direst pain; but they also enable the sufferer to bear,

pain that would soon wear away the delicate. And Jasper bore his pains stoutly, though at times they so exasperated his temper, that woe then to any of his comrades whose want of caution or respect gave him the occasion to seek relief in wrath! His hand was as heavy, his arm as stalwart as ever. George Morley had been rightly informed. Even by burglars and cut-throats, whose dangers he shunned, while fearlessly he joined their circle, Jasper Losely was regarded with terror. To be the awe of reckless men, as he had been the admiration of foolish women, this was delight to his vanity, the last delight that was left to it. But he thus provoked a danger to which his arrogance was blind. His boon companions began to grow tired of him. He had been welcomed to their resort on the strength of the catchword or passport which confederates at Paris had communicated to him, and of the reputation for great daring and small scruple which he took from Cutts, who was of high caste amongst their mysterious tribes, and who every now and then flitted over the Continent, safe and accursed as the Wandering Jew. But when they found that this Achilles of the Greeks would only talk big, and employ his wits on his private exchequer and his thews against themselves, they began not only to tire of his imperious manner, but to doubt his fidelity to the cause. And, all of a sudden, Cutts, who had at first extolled Jasper as one likely to be a valuable acquisition to the Family of Night, altered his tone, and insinuated that the bravo was not to be trusted; that his reckless temper and incautious talk when drunk would unfit him for a safe accomplice in any skilful project of plunder; and that he was so unscrupulous, and had so little sympathy with their class, that he might be quite capable of playing spy or turning king's evidence; that, in short, it would be well to rid themselves of his domineering presence. Still there was that physical power in this lazy Hercules—still, if the Do-nought, he was so fiercely the Dread-nought—that they did not dare, despite the advantage of numbers, openly to brave and defy him. No one would bell the cat—and *such* a cat! They began to lay plots to get rid of him through the law. Nothing could be easier to such knowing adepts in guilt than to transfer to his charge any deed of violence one of their own gang had committed—heap damning circumstances

round him—privily apprise justice—falsely swear away his life. In short, the man was in their way as a wasp that has blundered into an ant's nest; and, while frightened at the size of the intruder, these honest ants were resolved to get him out of their citadel alive or dead. Probable it was that Jasper Losely would meet with his deserts at last for an offence of which he was innocent as a babe unborn.

It is at this juncture that we are re-admitted to the presence of Arabella Crane.

She was standing by a window on the upper floor of a house situated in a narrow street. The blind was let down, but she had drawn it a little aside, and was looking out. By the fireside was seated a thin, vague, gnome-like figure, perched comfortless on the edge of a rush-bottomed chair, with its shadowy knees drawn up till they nearly touched its shadowy chin. There was something about the outline of this figure so indefinite and unsubstantial, that you might have taken it for an optical illusion, a spectral apparition on the point of vanishing. This thing was, however, possessed of voice, and was speaking in a low but distinct hissing whisper. As the whisper ended, Arabella Crane, without turning her face, spoke, also under her breath.

"You are sure that, so long as Losely draws this weekly stipend from the man whom he has in his power, he will persist in the same course of life. Can you not warn him of the danger?"

"Peach against pals! I dare not. No trusting him. He would come down, mad with brandy, make an infernal row, seize two or three by the throat, dash their heads against each other, blab, bully, and a knife would be out, and a weasand or two cut, and a carcase or so dropped into the Thames—mine certainly—his perhaps."

"You say you can keep back this plot against him for two or three days?"

"For two days—yes. I should be glad to save General Jas. He has the bones of a fine fellow, and if he had not destroyed himself by brandy, he might have been at the top of the tree—in the profession. But he is fit for nothing now."

"Ah! and you say the brandy is killing him?"

"No, he will not be killed by brandy, if he continues to drink it among the same jolly set."

"And if he were left without the money to spend amongst these terrible companions, he would no longer resort to their meetings? You are right there. The same vanity that makes him pleased to be the great man in that society would make him shrink from coming amongst them as a beggar."

"And if he had not the wherewithal to pay the weekly subscription, there would be an excuse to shut the door in his face. All these fellows wish to do is to get rid of him; and if by fair means, there would be no necessity to resort to foul. The only danger would be that from which you have so often saved him. In despair, would he not commit some violent rash action—a street robbery, or something of the kind? He has courage for any violence, but no longer the cool head to plan a scheme which would not be detected. You see I can prevent my pals joining in such risks as he may propose, or letting him (if he were to ask it) into any adventure of their own, for they know that I am a safe adviser; they respect me; the law has never been able to lay hold of *me;* and when I say to them, 'that fellow drinks, blabs, and boasts, and would bring us all into trouble,' they will have nothing to do with him; but I cannot prevent his doing what he pleases out of his own muddled head, and with his own reckless hand."

"But you will keep in his confidence, and let me know all that he proposes!"

"Yes."

"And meanwhile, he must come to me. And this time I have more hope than ever, since his health gives way, and he is weary of crime itself. Mr. Cutts, come near—softly. Look—nay, nay, he cannot see you from below, and you are screened by the blind. Look, I say, where he sits."

She pointed to a room on the ground-floor in the opposite house, where might be dimly seen a dull red fire in a sordid grate, and a man's form, the head pillowed upon arms that rested on a small table. On the table a glass, a bottle.

"It is thus that his mornings pass," said Arabella Crane, with a wild bitter pity in the tone of her voice. "Look, I say, is he formidable now? *can* you fear him?"

"Very much indeed," muttered Cutts. "He is only stupefied, and he can shake off a doze as quickly as a bull-dog does when a rat is let into his kennel."

"Mr. Cutts, you tell me that he constantly carries about him the same old pocket-book which he says contains his fortune; in other words, the papers that frighten his victim into giving him the money which is now the cause of his danger. There is surely no pocket you cannot pick or get picked, Mr. Cutts? Fifty pounds for that book in three hours."

"Fifty pounds are not enough; the man he sponges on would give more to have those papers in his power."

"Possibly; but Losely has not been dolt enough to trust you sufficiently to enable you to know how to commence negotiations. Even if the man's name and address be amongst those papers, you could not make use of the knowledge without bringing Jasper himself upon you; and even if Jasper were out of the way, you would not have the same hold over his victim; you know not the circumstances; you could make no story out of some incoherent rambling letters; and the man, who, I can tell you, is by nature a bully, and strong, compared with any other man but Jasper, would seize you by the collar; and you would be lucky if you got out of his house with no other loss than the letters, and no other gain but a broken bone. Pooh! you know all that, or you would have stolen the book, and made use of it before. Fifty pounds for that book in three hours; and if Jasper Losely be safe and alive six months hence, fifty pounds more, Mr. Cutts. See! he stirs not—he must be fast asleep. Now is the moment."

"What, in his own room!" said Cutts with contempt. "Why, he would know who did it; and where should I be to-morrow? No—in the streets; any one has a right to pick a pocket in the Queen's highways. In three hours you shall have the book."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mercury is the Patron Deity of Mercantile Speculators, as well as of crack-brained Poets; indeed, he is much more favourable, more a friend at a pinch, to the former class of his protégés than he is to the latter.

"POOLUM per hostes Mercurius celer
Denso paventum sustulit aere."

POOLE was sitting with his wife after dinner. He had made a good speculation that day; little Johnny would be all the better for it a few years hence, and some other man's little Johnnys all the worse—but each for himself in this world! Poole was therefore basking in the light of his gentle helpmate's approving smile. He had taken an extra glass of a venerable port-wine, which had passed to his cellar from the bins of Uncle Sam. Commercial prosperity without, conjugal felicity within, the walls of Alhambra Villa; surely Adolphus Poole is an enviable man! Does he look so? The ghost of what he was but a few months ago! His cheeks have fallen in; his clothes hang on him like bags; there is a worried, haggard look in his eyes, a nervous twitch in his lips, and every now and then he looks at the handsome Parisian clock on the chimney-piece, and then shifts his posture, snubs his connubial angel, who asks "what ails him?" refills his glass, and stares on the fire, seeing strange shapes in the mobile aspect of the coals.

To-morrow brings back this weekly spectre! To-morrow Jasper Losely, punctual to the stroke of eleven, returns to remind him of that past which, if revealed, will blast the future. And revealed it might be any hour despite the bribe for silence which he must pay with his own hands, under his own roof. Would he trust another with the secret of that payment?—horror! Would he visit Losely at his own lodging, and pay him there?—murder! Would he appoint him somewhere in the streets—run the chance of being seen with such a friend? Respectability confabulating with offal?—disgrace! And Jasper had on the last two or three visits been peculiarly disagreeable. He had talked loud. Poole feared that his wife might have her ear at the key-hole. Jasper had seen the parlour-maid in the passage as he went out, and caught her round the waist. The parlour-maid had complained to Mrs. Poole,

and said she should leave if so insulted by such an ugly blackguard. Alas! what the poor lady-killer has come to! Mrs. Poole had grown more and more inquisitive and troublesome on the subject of such extraordinary visits; and now, as her husband stirred the fire—having roused her secret ire by his previous unmanly snubbings, and Mrs. Poole being one of those incomparable wives who have a perfect command of temper, who never reply to angry words at the moment, and who always, with exquisite calm and self-possession, pay off every angry word by an amiable sting at a right moment—Mrs. Poole, I say, thus softly said—

"Sammy, duck, we know what makes oo so cross; but it shan't vex oo long, Sammy. That dreadful man comes to-morrow. He always comes the same day of the week."

"Hold your tongue, Mrs. Poole."

"Yes, Sammy, dear, I'll hold my tongue. But Sammy shan't be imposed upon by mendicants; for I know he is a mendicant—one of those sharpers or black-legs who took oo in, poor innocent Sam, in oo wild bachelor days, and oo good heart can't bear to see him in distress; but there must be an end to all things."

"Mrs. Poole—Mrs. Poole—will you stop your fool's jaw or not?"

"My poor dear Hubby," said the angel, squeezing out a mild tear, "oo will be in good hands to advise oo; for I've been and told Pa!"

"You have," faltered Poole, "told your father—you have!" and the expression of his face became so ghastly that Mrs. Poole grew seriously terrified. She had long felt that there was something very suspicious in her husband's submission to the insolence of so rude a visitor. But she knew that he was not brave; the man might intimidate him by threats of personal violence. The man might probably be some poor relation, or some one whom Poole had ruined, either in bygone discreditable sporting days, or in recent respectable mercantile speculations. But at that ghastly look a glimpse of the real truth broke upon her; and she stood speechless and appalled. At this moment there was a loud ring at the street-door bell. Poole gathered himself up, and staggered out of the room into the passage.

His wife remained without motion; for the first time

she conceived a fear of her husband. Presently she heard a harsh female voice in the hall, and then a joyous exclamation from Poole himself. Recovered by these unexpected sounds, she went mechanically forth into the passage, just in time to see the hems of a dark iron-grey dress disappearing within Poole's study, while Poole, who had opened the study door, and was bowing-in the iron-grey dress obsequiously, turned his eye towards his wife, and striding towards her for a moment, whispered "Go up-stairs and stir not," in a tone so unlike his usual gruff accents of command, that it cowed her out of the profound contempt with which she habitually received, while smilingly obeying, his marital authority.

Poole, vanishing into his study, carefully closed his door, and would have caught his lady visitor by both her hands; but she waived him back, and, declining a seat, remained sternly erect.

"Mr. Poole, I have but a few words to say. The letters which gave Jasper Losely the power to extort money from you are no longer in his possession; they are in mine. You need fear him no more—you will fee him no more."

"Oh!" cried Poole, falling on his knees, "the blessing of a father of a family—a babe not six weeks born—be on your blessed, blessed head!"

"Get up, and don't talk nonsense. I do not give you these papers at present, nor burn them. Instead of being in the power of a muddled, irresolute drunkard, you are in the power of a vigilant, clear-brained woman. You are in my power, and you will act as I tell you."

"You can ask nothing wrong, I am sure," said Poole, his grateful enthusiasm much abated. "Command me; but the papers can be of no use to you; I will pay for them handsomely."

"Be silent and listen. I retain these papers—first, because Jasper Losely must not know that they ever passed to my hands; secondly, because you must inflict no injury on Losely himself. Betray me to him, or try to render himself up to the law, and the documents will be used against you ruthlessly. Obey, and you have nothing to fear, and nothing to pay. When Jasper Losely calls on you to-morrow, ask him to show you the letters. He cannot; he will make excuses. Decline peremptorily, but not insultingly (his temper is fierce), to pay him farther. He

will perhaps charge you with having hired some one to purloin his pocket-book; let him think it. Stop—your window here opens on the ground;—a garden without:—Ah! have three of the police in that garden, in sight of the window. Point to them if he threaten you; summon them to your aid, or pass out to them, if he actually attempt violence. But when he has left the house, you must urge no charge against him; he must be let off unscathed. You can be at no loss for excuse in this mercy; a friend of former times—needy, unfortunate, whom habits of drink maddened for the moment—necessary to eject him—inhuman to prosecute—any story you please. The next day you can, if you choose, leave London for a short time; I advise it. But his teeth will be drawn; he will most probably never trouble you again. I know his character. There, I have done; open the door, sir."

CHAPTER IX.

The wreck and the life-boat in a fog.

The next day, a little after noon, Jasper Losely, coming back from Alhambra Villa—furious, desperate, knowing not where to turn for bread, or on whom to pour his rage—beheld suddenly, in a quiet, half-built street, which led from the suburb to the New Road, Arabella Crane standing right in his path. She had emerged from one of the many straight intersecting roads which characterise that crude nebula of a future city; and the woman and the man met thus face to face; not another passer-by visible in the thoroughfare;—at a distance the dozing hack cab-stand; round and about them carcases of brick and mortar—some with gaunt scaffolding fixed into their ribs, and all looking yet more weird in their raw struggle into shape through the livid haze of a yellow fog.

Losely, seeing Arabella thus planted in his way, recoiled; and the superstition in which he had long associated her image with baffled schemes and perilous hours, sent the wrathful blood back through his veins so quickly that he heard his heart beat!

Mrs. Crane.—"So! You see we cannot help meeting, Jasper dear, do what you will to shun me."

LOSELY.—"I—I—you always startle me so!—you are in town, then?—to stay?—your old quarters?"

MRS. CRANE.—"Why ask? You cannot wish to know where I am—you would not call. But how fares it?—what do you do?—how do you live? You look ill—Poor Jasper."

LOSELY (fiercely).—"Hang your pity, and give me some money."

MRS. CRANE (calmly laying her lean hand on the arm which was darted forward more in menace than entreaty, and actually terrifying the Gladiator as she linked that deadly arm into her own).—"I said you would always find me when at the worst of your troubles. And so, Jasper, it shall be till this right hand of yours is powerless as the clay at our feet. Walk—walk; you are not afraid of me?—walk on, tell me all. Where have you just been?"

Jasper, therewith reminded of his wrongs, poured out a volley of abuse on Poole, communicating to Mrs. Crane the whole story of his claims on that gentleman—the loss of the pocket-book filched from him, and Poole's knowledge that he was thus disarmed.

"And the coward," said he, grinding his teeth, "got out of his window—and three policemen in his garden. He must have bribed a pickpocket—low knave that he is. But I shall find out—and then—"

"And, then, Jasper, how will you be better off?—the letters are gone; and Poole has you in his power if you threaten him again. Now, hark you; you did not murder the Italian who was found stabbed in the fields yonder a week ago; £100 reward for the murderer?"

"I—no. How coldly you ask! I have hit hard in fair fight;—murdered—never. If ever I take to that, I shall begin with Poole."

"But I tell you, Jasper, that you are suspected of that murder; that you will be accused of that murder; and if I had not thus fortunately met you, for that murder you would be tried and hanged."

"Are you serious? Who could accuse me?"

"Those who know that you are not guilty—those who could make you appear so—the villains with whom you horde, and drink, and brawl! Have I ever been wrong in my warnings yet?"

"This is too horrible," faltered Losely, thinking not of

the conspiracy against his life, but of her prescience in detecting it. "It must be witchcraft and nothing else. How could you learn what you tell me?"

"That is my affair; enough for you that I am right. Go no more to those black haunts; they are even now full of snares and pitfalls for you. Leave London, and you are safe. Trust to me."

"And where shall I go?"

"Look you, Jasper; you have worn out this old world—no refuge for you but the new. Whither went your father, thither go you. Consent and you shall not want. You cannot discover Sophy. You have failed in all attempts on Darrell's purse. But agree to sail to Australasia, and I will engage to you an income larger than you say you extorted from Poole, to be spent in those safer shores."

"And you will go with me, I suppose," said Losely, with ungracious sullenness.

"Go with you, as you please. Be where you are—yes."

The ruffian bounded with rage and loathing.

"Woman, cross me no more, or I shall be goaded into—"

"Into killing me—you dare not! Meet my eye if you can—you dare not! Harm me, yea a hair of my head, and your moments are numbered!—your doom sealed. Be we two together in a desert—not a human eye to see the deed—not a human ear to receive my groan, and still I should stand by your side unharmed. I, who have returned the wrongs received from you, by vigilant, untiring benefits—I, who have saved you from so many enemies, and so many dangers—I, who, now when all the rest of earth shun you—when all other resource fails—I, who now say to you, 'Share my income, but be honest!'—*I* receive injury from that hand! No; the guilt would be too unnatural—Heaven would not permit it. Try, and your arm will fall palsied by your side!"

Jasper's bloodshot eyes dropped beneath the woman's fixed and scorching gaze, and his lips, white and tremulous, refused to breathe the fierce curse into which his brutal nature concentrated its fears and its hate. He walked on in gloomy silence; but some words she had let fall suggested a last resort to his own daring.

She had urged him to quit the old world for the new,

but that had been the very proposition conveyed to him from Darrell. If that proposition, so repugnant to the indolence that had grown over him, must be embraced, better at least sail forth alone, his own master, than be the dependent slave of this abhorred and persecuting benefactress. His despair gave him the determination he had hitherto lacked. He would seek Darrell himself, and make the best compromise he could. This resolve passed into his mind as he stalked on through the yellow fog, and his nerves recovered from their irritation, and his thoughts regained something of their ancient craft as the idea of escaping from Mrs. Crane's vigilance and charity assumed a definite shape.

"Well," said he at length, dissimulating his repugnance, and with an effort at his old half-coaxing, half-rollicking tones, "you certainly are the best of creatures; and, as you say,

> "Had I a heart for falsehood framed,
> I ne'er could injure you,"

ungrateful dog though I may seem, and very likely am. I own I have a horror of Australasia—such a long sea-voyage! New scenes no longer attract me; I am no longer young, though I ought to be; but if you insist on it, and will really condescend to accompany me in spite of all my sins to you, why, I can make up my mind. And as to honesty, ask those infernal rascals, who, you say, would swear away my life, and they will tell you that I have been as innocent as a Lamb since my return to England; and that is my guilt in their villanous eyes. As long as that infamous Poole gave me enough for my humble wants, I was a reformed man. I wish to keep reformed. Very little suffices for me now. As you say, Australasia may be the best place for me. When shall we go?"

"Are you serious?"

"To be sure."

"Then I will inquire the days on which the vessels sail. You can call on me at my own old home, and all shall be arranged. Oh, Jasper Losely, do not avoid this last chance of escape from the perils that gather round you."

"No; I am sick of life—of all things except repose, Arabella, I suffer horrible pain."

He groaned, for he spoke truly. At that moment the

gnaw of the monster anguish, which fastens on the nerves like a wolf's tooth, was so keen that he longed to swell his groan into a roar. The old fable of Hercules in the poisoned tunic was surely invented by some skilled physiologist to denote the truth that it is only in the strongest frames that pain can be pushed into its extremest torture. The heart of the grim woman was instantly and thoroughly softened. She paused; she made him lean on her arm; she wiped the drops from his brow; she addressed him in the most soothing tones of pity. The spasm passed away suddenly as it does in neuralgic agonies, and with it any gratitude or any remorse in the breast of the sufferer.

"Yes," he said, "I will call on you; but meanwhile I am without a farthing. Oh, do not fear that if you helped me now, I should again shun you. I have no other resource left; nor have I now the spirit I once had. I no longer now laugh at fatigue and danger."

"But will you swear by all that you yet hold sacred—if, alas! there be aught which is sacred to you—that you will not again seek the company of those men who are conspiring to entrap you into the hangman's hands?"

"Seek them again, the ungrateful cowardly blackguards! No, no; I promise you that—solemnly; it is medical aid that I want; it is rest, I tell you—rest, rest, rest."

Arabella Crane drew forth her purse. "Take what you will," said she gently. Jasper, whether from the desire to deceive her, or because her alms were so really distasteful to his strange kind of pride that he stinted to bare necessity the appeal to them, contented himself with the third or fourth of the sovereigns that the purse contained, and after a few words of thanks and promises, he left her side, and soon vanished in the fog that grew darker and darker as the night-like wintry day deepened over the silent thoroughfares.

The woman went her way through the mists, hopeful—through the mists went the man, hopeful also. Recruiting himself by slight food and strong drink at a tavern on his road, he stalked on to Darrell's house in Carlton Gardens; and, learning there that Darrell was at Fawley, hastened to the station from which started the train to the town nearest to the old manor-house; reached that town safely, and there rested for the night.

BOOK IX.



CHAPTER I.

The secret which Guy Darrell did not confide to Alban Morley.

It was a serene noonday in that melancholy interlude of the seasons when autumn has really ceased—winter not yet visibly begun. The same hired vehicle which had borne Lionel to Fawley, more than five years ago, stopped at the gate of the wild umbrageous grass-land that surrounded the antique Manor-house. It had been engaged, from the nearest railway-station on the London road, by a lady, with a female companion who seemed her servant. The driver dismounted, opened the door of the vehicle, and the lady, bidding him wait there till her return, and saying a few words to her companion, descended, and, drawing her cloak round her, walked on alone towards the Manor-house. At first her step was firm, and her pace quick. She was still under the excitement of the resolve in which the journey from her home had been suddenly conceived and promptly accomplished. But as the path wound on through the stillness of venerable groves, her courage began to fail her. Her feet loitered, her eyes wandered round vaguely, timidly. The scene was not new to her. As she gazed, rushingly gathered over her sorrowful shrinking mind memories of sportive happy summer days, spent in childhood amidst those turfs and shades—memories, more agitating, of the last visit (childhood then ripened into blooming youth) to the ancient dwelling which, yet concealed from view by the swells of the undulating ground and the yellow boughs of the giant trees, betrayed its site by the smoke rising thin and dim against the limpid atmosphere. She bent down her head, closing her eyes as if to shut out less the face of the landscape than the images that rose ghost-like up to people it, and sighed heavily, heavily. Now—hard by, roused from its bed amongst the fern, the doe that Darrell had tamed into companionship had

watched with curiosity this strange intruder on its solitary range. But at the sound of that heavy sigh, the creature, emboldened, left its halting-place, and stole close to the saddened woman, touching her very dress. Doubtless, as Darrell's companion in his most musing hours, the doe was familiarised to the sound of sighs, and associated the sound with its gentlest notions of humanity.

The lady, starting, raised her drooping lids, and met those soft dark eyes, dark and soft as her own. Round the animal's neck there was a simple collar, with a silver plate, fresh and new, evidently placed there recently; and as the creature thrust forward its head, as if for the caress of a wonted hand, the lady read the inscription. The words were in Italian, and may be construed thus: "Female, yet not faithless; fostered, yet not ungrateful." As she read, her heart so swelled, and her resolve so deserted her, that she turned as if she had received a sentence of dismissal, and went back some hasty paces. The doe followed her till she paused again, and then it went slowly down a narrow path to the left, which led to the banks of the little lake.

The lady had now recovered herself. "It is a duty, and it must be done," she muttered, and letting down the veil she had raised on entering the demesne, she hurried on, not retracing her steps in the same path, but taking that into which the doe had stricken, perhaps in the confused mistake of a mind absorbed and absent—perhaps in revived recollection of the localities, for the way thus to the house was shorter than by the weed-grown carriage-road. The lake came in view, serene and glassy; half-leafless woodlands reflected far upon its quiet waters; the doe halted, lifted its head, and sniffed the air, and somewhat quickening its pace, vanished behind one of the hillocks clothed with brushwood, that gave so primitive and forest-like a character to the old ground. Advancing still, there now, at her right hand, grew out of the landscape the noble turrets of the unfinished pile; and, close at her left, under a gnarled fantastic thorn-tree, the still lake at his feet reflecting his stiller shadow, reclined Guy Darrell, the doe nestled at his side.

So unexpected this sight—he, whom she came to seek yet feared to see, so close upon her way—the lady uttered a faint but sharp cry, and Darrell sprang to his feet. She

stood before him, veiled, mantled, bending as a suppliant.

"Avaunt!" he faltered wildly. "Is this a spirit my own black solitude conjures up—or is it a delusion, a dream?"

"It is I—I!—the Caroline dear to you once, if detested now! Forgive me! Not for myself I come." She flung back her veil—her eyes pleadingly sought his.

"So," said Darrell, gathering his arms round his breast in the gesture peculiar to him when seeking either to calm a more turbulent movement, or to confirm a sterner resolution of his heart—"so! Caroline, Marchioness of Montfort, we are then fated to meet face to face at last! I understand—Lionel Haughton, sent, or showed to you, my letter?"

"Oh! Mr. Darrell, how could you have the heart to write in such terms of one who—"

"One who had taken the heart from my bosom and trampled it into the mire. True, fribbles will say, 'Fie! the vocabulary of fine gentlemen has no harsh terms for women.' Gallants, to whom love is pastime, leave or are left with elegant sorrow and courtly bows. Madam, I was never such airy gallant. I am but a man unhappily in earnest—a man who placed in those hands his life of life—who said to you, while yet in his prime, 'There is my future—take it, till it vanish out of earth!' You have made that life substanceless as a ghost—that future barren as the grave. And when you dare force yourself again upon my way, and would dictate laws to my very hearth—if I speak as a man what plain men must feel—'Oh! Mr. Darrell,' says your injured ladyship, 'how can you have the heart?' Woman! were you not false as the falsest? Falsehood has no dignity to awe rebuke—falsehood no privilege of sex."

"Darrell—Darrell—Darrell—spare me, spare me! I have been so punished—I am so miserable!"

"You!—punished!—What! you sold yourself to youth, and sleek looks, and grand titles, and the flattery of a world; and your rose-leaves were crumpled in the gorgeous marriage-bed. Adequate punishment!—A crumpled rose-leaf! True, the man was a ——. But why should I speak ill of him? It was he who was punished, if, accepting his rank, you recognised in himself a nothingness

that you could neither love nor honour. False and ungrateful alike to the man you chose—to the man you forsook! And now you have buried one, and you have schemed to degrade the other."

"Degrade!—Oh! it is that charge which has stung me to the quick. All the others I deserve. But *that* charge! Listen—you shall listen."

"I stand here resigned to do so. Say all you will now, for it is the last time on earth I lend my ears to your voice."

"Be it so—the last time." She paused to recover speech, collect thoughts, gain strength; and strange though it may seem to those who have never loved, amidst all her grief and humiliation there was a fearful delight in that presence from which she had been exiled since her youth—nay, delight unaccountable to herself, even in that rough, vehement, bitter tempest of reproach, for an instinct told her that there would have been no hatred in the language had no love been lingering in the soul.

"Speak," said Darrell gently, softened, despite himself, by her evident struggle to control emotion.

Twice she began—twice voice failed her. At last her words came forth audibly. She began with her plea for Lionel and Sophy, and gathered boldness by her zeal on their behalf. She proceeded to vindicate her own motives—to acquit herself of his harsh charge. She scheme for his degradation! She had been too carried away by her desire to promote his happiness—to guard him from the possibility of a self-reproach. At first he listened to her with a haughty calmness, merely saying, in reference to Sophy and Lionel, "I have nothing to add or to alter in the resolution I have communicated to Lionel." But when she thus insensibly mingled their cause with her own, his impatience broke out. "My happiness! Oh! well have you proved the sincerity with which you schemed for *that!* Save me from self-reproach—me! Has Lady Montfort so wholly forgotten that she was once Caroline Lyndsay that she can assume the part of a warning angel against the terrors of self reproach?"

"Ah!" she murmured faintly, "can you suppose, however fickle and thankless I may seem to you——"

"Seem!" he repeated.

"Seem!" she said again, but meekly—"seem, and seem

justly;—yet can you suppose that when I became free to utter my remorse—to speak of gratitude, of reverence—I was insincere? Darrell, Darrell, you cannot think so! That letter which reached you abroad nearly a year ago, in which I laid my pride of woman at your feet, as I lay it now in coming here—that letter, in which I asked if it were impossible for you to pardon, too late for me to atone—was written on my knees. It was the outburst of my very heart. Nay, nay, hear me out. Do not imagine that I would again obtrude a hope so contemptuously crushed!" (a deep blush came over her cheek.) "I blame you not, nor, let me say it, did your severity bring that shame which I might have justly felt had I so written to any man on earth but you—you, so reverenced from my infancy, that——"

"Ay," interrupted Darrell fiercely, "ay, do not fear that I should misconceive you; you would not so have addressed the young, the fair, the happy. No! you, proud beauty, with hosts, no doubt, of supplicating wooers, would have thrust that hand into the flames before it wrote to a young man, loved as the young are loved, what without shame it wrote to the old man, reverenced as the old are *reverenced!* But my heart is not old, and your boasted reverence was a mocking insult. Your letter, torn to pieces, was returned to you without a word—insult for insult! You felt no shame that I should so rudely reject your pity. Why should you? Rejected pity is not rejected love. The man was not less old because he was not reconciled to age."

This construction of her tender penitence—this explanation of his bitter scorn—took Caroline Montfort wholly by surprise. From what writhing agonies of lacerated self-love came that pride which was but self-depreciation? It was a glimpse into the deeper rents of his charred and desolated being which increased at once her yearning affection and her passionate despair. Vainly she tried to utter the feelings that crowded upon her!—vainly, vainly! Woman can murmur, "I have injured you—forgive!" when she cannot exclaim, "You disdain me, but I love!" Vainly, vainly, her bosom heaved and her lips moved under the awe of his flashing eyes and the grandeur of his indignant frown.

"Ah!" he resumed, pursuing his own thoughts with a sombre intensity of passion that rendered him almost un-

conscious of her presence—"Ah! I said to myself, 'Oh, she believes that she has been so mourned and missed that my soul would spring back to her false smile; that I could be so base a slave to my senses as to pardon the traitress because her face was fair enough to haunt my dreams. She dupes herself; she is no necessity to my existence—I have wrenched it from her power years, long years ago! I will show her since again she deigns to remember me, that I am not so old as to be grateful for the leavings of a heart. I will love another—I will be beloved. She shall not say with secret triumph, 'The old man dotes in rejecting me.'"

"Darrell, Darrell—unjust—cruel; kill me rather than talk thus!"

He heeded not her cry. His words rolled on in that wonderful, varying music which, whether in tenderness or in wrath, gave to his voice a magical power—fascinating, hushing, overmastering human souls.

"But—you have the triumph; see, I am still alone! I sought the world of the young—the marriage mart of the Beautiful once more. Alas! if my eye was captured for a moment, it was by something that reminded me of you. I saw a faultless face, radiant with its virgin blush; moved to it, I drew near—sighing, turned away; it was not you! I heard the silvery laugh of a life fresh as an April morn. 'Hark!' I said, 'is not that the sweet mirth-note at which all my cares were dispelled?' Listening, I forgot my weight of years. Why? because listening, I remembered you. 'Heed not the treacherous blush and the beguiling laugh,' whispered Prudence. 'Seek in congenial mind a calm companion to thine own.' Mind!—oh frigid pedantry! Mind!—had not yours been a volume open to my eyes; in every page, methought, some lovely poet-truth never revealed to human sense before! No; you had killed to me all womanhood! Woo another!—wed another! 'Hush,' I said, 'it *shall* be. Eighteen years since we parted—seeing her not, she remains eternally the same! Seeing her again, the very change that time must have brought will cure.' I saw you—all the past rushed back in that stolen moment. I fled—never more to dream that I can shake off the curse of memory—blent with each drop of my blood—woven with each tissue—throbbing in each nerve—bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh—poison-root

from which every thought buds to wither—the curse to have loved and to have trusted you!"

"Merciful heaven! can I bear this?" cried Caroline, clasping her hands to her bosom. "And is my sin so great—is it so unpardonable? Oh, if in a heart so noble, in a nature so great, mine was the unspeakable honour to inspire an affection thus enduring, must it be only—only as a curse! Why can I not repair the past? You have not ceased to love me. Call it hate—it is love still! And now, no barrier between our lives, can I never, never again—never, now that I know I am less unworthy of you by the very anguish I feel to have so stung you—can I never again be the Caroline of old?"

"Ha, ha!" burst forth the unrelenting man, with a bitter laugh!—"see the real coarseness of a woman's nature under all its fine-spun frippery! Behold these delicate creatures, that we scarcely dare to woo! how little they even comprehend the idolatry they inspire! The Caroline of old! Lo, the virgin whose hand we touched with knightly homage, whose first bashful kiss was hallowed as the gate of paradise, deserts us—sells herself at the altar—sanctifies there her very infidelity to us; and when years have passed, and a death has restored her freedom, she comes to us as if she had never pillowed her head on another's bosom, and says, 'Can I not again be the Caroline of old!' We men are too rude to forgive the faithless. Where is the Caroline I loved? *You*—are—my Lady Montfort! Look round. On these turfs, you, then a child, played beside my children. They are dead, but less dead to me than you. Never dreamed I then that a creature so fair would be other than a child to my grave and matured existence. Then, if I glanced towards your future, I felt no pang to picture you grown to womanhood—another's bride. My hearth had for years been widowed, I had no thought of second nuptials. My son would live to enjoy my wealth, and realise my cherished dreams—my son was snatched from me! Who alone had the power to comfort?—who alone had the courage to steal into the darkened room where I sate mourning? sure that in her voice there would be consolation, and the sight of her sympathising tears would chide away the bitterness of mine?—who but the Caroline of old! Ah, you are weeping now. But Lady Montfort's tears have no talisman

to me! You were then still a child—as a child, my soothing angel.—A year or so more my daughter, to whom all my pride of House—all my hope of race, had been consigned—she whose happiness I valued so much more than my ambition, that I had refused her hand to your young Lord of Montfort—puppet that, stripped of the millinery of titles, was not worthy to replace a doll!—my daughter, I folded her one night in my arms,—I implored her to confide in me if ever she nursed a hope that I could further —knew a grief that I could banish; and she promised— and she bent her forehead to my blessing—and before daybreak she had fled with a man whose very touch was dishonour and pollution, and was lost to me for ever. . . . Then, when I came hither to vent at my father's grave the indignant grief I suffered not the world to see, you and your mother (she who professed for me such loyal friendship, such ineffaceable gratitude), you two came kindly to share my solitude—and then, then you were a child no more!—and a sun that had never gilt my life, brightened out of the face of the Caroline of old!" He paused a moment, heeding not her bitter weeping; he was rapt from the present hour itself by the excess of that anguish which is to woe what ecstasy is to joy—swept along by the flood of thoughts that had been pent within his breast through the solitary days and haunted nights, which had made the long transition-state from his manhood's noon to its gathering eve. And in that pause there came from afar off a melodious, melancholy strain—softly, softly borne over the cold blue waters—softly, softly through the sere autumnal leaves—the music of the magic flute!

"Hark!" he said, "do you not remember? Look to that beech-tree yonder! Summer clothed it then! Do you not remember! as under that tree we stood—that same, same note came, musical as now, undulating with rise and fall—came, as if to interpret, by a voice from fairyland, the beatings of my own mysterious heart. You had been pleading for pardon to one less ungrateful—less perfidious —than my comforter proved herself. I had listened to you, wondering why anger and wrong seemed banished from the world; and I murmured, in answer, without conscious thought of myself, 'Happy the man whose faults your bright charity will admonish—whose griefs your tenderness will chase away! But when, years hence, children

are born to yourself, spare me the one who shall most resemble you, to replace the daughter whom I can only sincerely pardon when something else can spring up to my desolate being—something that I can cherish without the memory of falsehood and the dread of shame.' Yes, as I ceased, came that music; and as it thrilled through the summer air, I turned and met your eyes—turned and saw your blush—turned and heard some faint faltering words drowning the music with diviner sweetness; and suddenly I knew as by a revelation, that the Child I had fostered had grown the Woman whom I loved.—My own soul was laid bare to me by the flash of hope. Over the universe rushed light and colour! Oh, the Caroline of old! What wonder that she became so fatally, so unspeakably beloved! As some man in ancient story, banished from his native land, is told by an oracle to seek a happier isle in undiscovered seas—freights with his all a single bark—collects on his wandering altar the last embers of his abandoned hearth—places beside it his exiled household gods; so all that my life had left to me, hallowing and hallowed, I stored in you. . . . . I tore myself from the old native soil, the old hardy skies. Through Time's wide ocean I saw but the promised golden isle. Fables, fables! —lying oracle!—sunken vessel!—visionary isle! And life to me had till then been so utterly without love!—had passed in such arid labours, without a holyday of romance —all the fountains of the unknown passion sealed till the spell struck the rock, and every wave, every drop sparkled fresh to a single star. Yet my boyhood, like other men's, had dreamed of its Ideal. There, at last that Ideal, come to life, bloomed before me; there, under those beech-trees —the Caroline of old. O wretched woman, now weeping at my side, well may you weep! Never can earth give you back such love as you lost in mine."

"I know it, I know it—fool that I was—miserable fool!"

"Ay, but comfort yourself—wilder and sadder folly in myself! Your mother was right. 'The vain child,' she said, 'knows not her own heart. She is new to the world —has seen none of her own years. For your sake, as for hers, I must insist on the experiment of absence. A year's ordeal—see if she is then of the same mind.' I marvelled at her coldness; proudly I submitted to her reasonings;

fearlessly I confided the result to you. Ah! how radiant was your smile, when, in the parting hour, I said, 'Summer and you will return again!' In vain, on pretence that the experiment should be complete, did your mother carry you abroad, and exact from us both the solemn promise that not even a letter should pass between us—that our troth, made thus conditional, should be a secret to all—in vain, if meant to torture me with doubt. In my creed, a doubt is itself a treason. How lovely grew the stern face of Ambition!—how Fame seemed as a messenger from me to you! In the sound of applause I said, 'They cannot shut out the air that will carry that sound to her ears! All that I can win from honour shall be my marriage gifts to my queenly bride.' See that arrested pile—begun at my son's birth, stopped awhile at his death, recommenced on a statelier plan when I thought of your footstep on its floors—your shadow on its walls. Stopped now for ever! Architects can build a palace; can they build a home? But you—you—you, all the while—your smile on another's suit—your thoughts on another's hearth!"

"Not so!—not so! Your image never forsook me. I was giddy, thoughtless, dazzled, entangled; and I told you in the letter you returned to me—told you that I had been deceived!"

"Patience—patience! Deceived! Do you imagine that I do not see all that passed as in a magician's glass? Caroline Montfort, you never loved me; you never knew what love was. Thrown suddenly into the gay world, intoxicated by the effect of your own beauty, my sombre figure gradually faded dim—pale ghost indeed in the atmosphere of flowers and lustres, rank with the breath of flatterers. Then came my lord the Marquess—a cousin, privileged to familiar intimacy, to visit at will, to ride with you, dance with you, sit side by side with you in quiet corners of thronging ball-rooms, to call you 'Caroline.' Tut, tut—ye are only cousins, and cousins are as brothers and sisters in the affectionate House of Vipont; and gossips talk, and young ladies envy—finest match in all England is the pretty-faced Lord of Montfort! And your mother, who had said, 'Wait a year' to Guy Darrell, must have dreamed of the cousin, and schemed for his coronet, when she said it. And I was unseen, and I must not write; and the absent are always in the wrong—when cousins are present!

And I hear your mother speak of me—hear the soft sound of her damaging praises. 'Another long speech from your clever admirer! Don't fancy he frets; that kind of man thinks of nothing but blue-books and politics.' And your cousin proposes, and you say with a sigh, 'No; I am bound to Guy Darrell;' and your mother says to my Lord, 'Wait, and still come—as a cousin!' And then, day by day, the sweet Mrs. Lyndsay drops into your ear the hints that shall poison your heart. Some fable is dressed to malign me; and you cry, ''Tis not true; prove it true, or I still keep my faith to Guy Darrell.' Then comes the kind compact —'If the story be false, my cousin must go.' 'And if it be true, you will be my own duteous child. Alas! your poor cousin is breaking his heart. A lawyer of forty has a heart made of parchment!' Aha! you were entangled, and of course deceived! Your letter did not explain what was the tale told to you. I care not a rush what it was. It is enough for me to know, that if you had loved me, you would have loved me the more for every tale that belied me. So the tale was credited, because a relief to credit it. So the compact was kept—so the whole bargain hurried over in elegant privacy—place of barter, an ambassador's chapel. Bauble for bauble—a jilt's faith for a mannikin's coronet. Four days before the year of trial expired, 'Only four days more!' I exclaimed, drunk with rapture. The journals lie before me. Three columns to Guy Darrell's speech last night; a column more to its effect on a senate, on an empire; and two lines—two little lines—to the sentence that struck Guy Darrell out of the world of men! 'Marriage in high life.—Marquess of Montfort—Caroline Lyndsay.' And the sun did not fall from heaven! Vulgarest of ends to the tritest of romances! In the gay world these things happen every day. Young ladies are privileged to give hopes to one man—their hands to another. 'Is the sin so unpardonable?' you ask, with ingenuous simplicity. Lady Montfort, that depends! Reflect! What was my life before I put it into your keeping? Barren of happiness, I grant—saddened, solitary—to myself a thing of small value. But what was that life to others?—a thing full of warm beneficence, of active uses, of hardy powers fitted to noble ends! In paralyzing that life as it was to others, there may be sin wider and darker than the mere

infidelity to love. And now do you dare to ask, 'Can I again be the Caroline of old'?"

"I ask nothing—not even pardon," said the miserable woman. "I might say something to show where you misjudge me—something that might palliate; but no, let it be." Her accents were so drearily hopeless that Darrell abruptly withdrew his eyes from her face, as if fearful that the sight of her woe might weaken his resolve. She had turned mechanically back. They walked on in gloomy silence side by side, away now from the lake—back under the barbed thorn-tree—back by the moss-grown crag—back by the hollow trunks, and over the fallen leaves of trees, that had defied the storms of centuries, to drop, perhaps, brittle and sapless, some quiet day when every wind is lulled.

The flute had ceased its music; the air had grown cold and piercing; the little park was soon traversed; the gate came in sight, and the humble vehicle without it. Then, involuntarily, both stopped; and on each there came at once the consciousness that they were about to part—part, never perhaps in this world to meet again; and, with all that had been said, so much unspoken—their hearts so full of what, alas! their lips could not speak.

"Lady Montfort," at length said Darrell.

At the sound of her name she shivered.

"I have addressed you rudely—harshly—"

"No—no——"

"But that was the last exercise of a right which I now resign for ever. I spoke to her who had once been Caroline Lyndsay; some gentler words are due to the widow of Lord Montfort. Whatever the wrongs you have inflicted on me—wrongs inexpiable—I recognise no less in your general nature qualities that would render you, to one whom you really loved, and had never deceived, the blessing I had once hoped you would prove to me."

She shook her head impatiently, piteously.

"I know that in an ill-assorted union, and amidst all the temptations to which flattered beauty is exposed, your conduct has been without reproach. Forget the old man whose thoughts should now be on his grave."

"Hush, hush—have human mercy!"

"I withdraw and repent my injustice to your motives in the protection you have given to the poor girl whom Lionel

would wed; I thank you for that protection,—though I refuse consent to my kinsman's prayer. Whatever her birth, I must be glad to know that she whom Lionel so loves is safe from a wretch like Losely. More—one word more—wait—it is hard for me to say it—Be happy! I cannot pardon, but I *can* bless you. Farewell for ever!"

More overpoweringly crushed by his tenderness than his wrath, before Caroline could recover the vehemence of her sobs, he had ceased—he was gone—lost in the close gloom of a neighbouring thicket, his hurried headlong path betrayed by the rustle of mournful boughs swinging back with their withered leaves.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECT.

There is a place at which three roads meet, sacred to that mysterious goddess called Diana on earth, Luna, or the Moon, in heaven, and Hecate in the infernal regions. At this place pause the virgins permitted to take their choice of the three roads. Few give their preference to that which is vowed to the goddess in her name of Diana: that road, cold and barren, is clothed by no roses and myrtles. Roses and myrtles veil the entrance to both the others, and in both the others Hymen has much the same gay-looking temples. But which of those two leads to the celestial Luna, or which of them conducts to the infernal Hecate, not one nymph in fifty divines. If thy heart should misgive thee, O nymph!—if, though cloud veil the path to the Moon, and sunshine gild that to pale Hecate—thine instinct recoils from the sunshine, while thou darest not adventure the cloud—thou hast still a choice left—thou hast still the safe road of Diana. Hecate, O nymph, is the goddess of ghosts. If thou takest *her* path, look not back, for the ghosts are behind thee.

When we slowly recover from the tumult and passion of some violent distress, a peculiar stillness falls upon the mind, and the atmosphere around it becomes in that stillness appallingly clear. We knew not, while wrestling with our woe, the extent of its ravages. As a land the day after a flood, as a field the day after a battle, is the sight of our own sorrow, when we no longer have to stem its raging, but to endure the destruction it has made. Distinct before Caroline Montfort's vision stretched the waste of her misery—the Past, the Present, the Future—all seemed to blend in one single Desolation. A strange thing it is how all time will converge itself, as it were, into the burning-glass of a moment! There runs a popular superstition

that it is thus, in the instant of death; that our whole existence crowds itself on the glazing eye—a panorama of all we have done on earth—just as the soul restores to the earth its garment. Certes, there are hours in our being, long before the last and dreaded one, when this phenomenon comes to warn us that, if memory were always active, time would be never gone. Rose before this woman—who, whatever the justice of Darrell's bitter reproaches, had a nature lovely enough to justify his anguish at her loss—the image of herself at that turning-point of life, when the morning mists are dimmed on our way, yet when a path chosen is a fate decided. Yes; she had excuses, not urged to the judge who sentenced, nor estimated to their full extent by the stern equity with which, amidst suffering and wrath, he had desired to weigh her cause.

Caroline's mother, Mrs. Lyndsay, was one of those parents who acquire an extraordinary influence over their children by the union of caressing manners with obstinate resolves. She never lost control of her temper nor hold on her object. A slight, delicate, languid creature too, who would be sure to go into a consumption if unkindly crossed. With much strong common sense, much knowledge of human nature, egotistical, worldly, scheming, heartless, but withal so pleasing, so gentle, so bewitchingly despotic, that it was like living with an electrobiologist, who unnerves you by a look to knock you down with a feather. In only one great purpose of her life had Mrs. Lyndsay failed. When Darrell, rich by the rewards of his profession and the bequest of his namesake, had entered Parliament, and risen into that repute which confers solid and brilliant station, Mrs. Lyndsay conceived the idea of appropriating to herself his honours and his wealth by a second Hymen. Having so long been domesticated in his house during the life of Mrs. Darrell, an intimacy as of near relations had been established between them. Her soft manners attached to her his children; and after Mrs. Darrell's death rendered it necessary that she should find a home of her own, she had an excuse, in Matilda's affection for her and for Caroline, to be more frequently before Darrell's eyes, and consulted by him yet more frequently, than when actually a resident in his house. To her Darrell confided the proposal which had been made to him by the old Marchioness of Montfort, for an alliance between her young grandson and

his sole surviving child. Wealthy as was the House of Vipont, it was amongst its traditional maxims that wealth wastes if not perpetually recruited. Every third generation at farthest, it was the duty of that house to marry an heiress. Darrell's daughter, just seventeen, not yet brought out, would be an heiress, if he pleased to make her so, second to none whom the research of the Marchioness had detected within the drawing-rooms and nurseries of the three kingdoms. The proposal of the venerable peeress was at first very naturally gratifying to Darrell. It was an euthanasia for the old knightly race to die into a House that was an institution in the empire, and revive phœnix-like in a line of peers, who might perpetuate the name of the heiress whose quarterings they would annex to their own, and sign themselves "Darrell Montfort." Said Darrell inly, "On the whole, such a marriage would have pleased my poor father." It did not please Mrs. Lyndsay. The bulk of Darrell's fortune thus settled away, he himself would be a very different match for Mrs. Lyndsay; nor was it to her convenience that Matilda should be thus hastily disposed of, and the strongest link of connection between Fulham and Carlton Gardens severed. Mrs. Lyndsay had one golden rule, which I respectfully point out to ladies who covet popularity and power: She never spoke ill of any one whom she wished to injure. She did not, therefore, speak ill of the Marquess to Darrell, but she so praised him that her praise alarmed. She ought to know the young peer well; she was a good deal with the Marchioness, who liked her pretty manners. Till then, Darrell had only noticed this Green Head of the Viponts as a neat-looking Head, too modest to open its lips. But he now examined the head with anxious deliberation, and finding it of the poorest possible kind of wood, with a heart to match, Guy Darrell had the audacity to reject, though with great courtesy, the idea of grafting the last plant of his line on a stem so pithless. Though, like men who are at once very affectionate and very busy, he saw few faults in his children, or indeed in any one he really loved, till the fault was forced on him, he could not but be aware that Matilda's sole chance of becoming a happy and safe wife, was in uniting herself with such a husband as would at once win her confidence and command her respect. He trembled when he thought of her as the wife of a man whose rank

would expose her to all fashionable temptations, and whose character would leave her without a guide or protector.

The Marquess, who obeyed his grandmother from habit, and who had lethargically sanctioned her proposals to Darrell, evinced the liveliest emotion he had ever yet betrayed when he learned that his hand was rejected. And if it were possible for him to carry so small a sentiment as pique into so large a passion as hate, from that moment he aggrandised his nature into hatred. He would have given half his lands to have spited Guy Darrell. Mrs. Lyndsay took care to be at hand to console him, and the Marchioness was grateful to her for taking that troublesome task upon herself. And in the course of their conversations Mrs. Lyndsay contrived to drop into his mind the egg of a project which she took a later occasion to hatch under her plumes of down. "There is but one kind of wife, my dear Montfort, who could increase your importance: you should marry a beauty; next to royalty ranks beauty." The Head nodded, and seemed to ruminate for some moments, and then *à propos des bottes*, it let fall this mysterious monosyllable, "Shoes." By what process of ratiocination the Head had thus arrived at the feet, it is not for me to conjecture. All I know is that, from that moment, Mrs. Lyndsay bestowed as much thought upon Caroline's *chaussure*, as if, like Cinderella, Caroline's whole destiny in this world hung upon her slipper. With the feelings and the schemes that have been thus intimated, this sensible lady's mortification may well be conceived when she was startled by Darrell's proposal, not to herself, but to her daughter. Her egotism was profoundly shocked, her worldliness cruelly thwarted. With Guy Darrell for her own spouse, the Marquess of Montfort for her daughter's, Mrs. Lyndsay would have been indeed a considerable personage in the world. But to lose Darrell for herself, the Marquess altogether—the idea was intolerable! Yet, since to have refused at once for her portionless daughter a man in so high a position, and to whom her own obligations were so great, was impossible, she adopted a policy, admirable for the craft of its conception and the dexterity of its execution. In exacting the condition of a year's delay, she made her motives appear so loftily disinterested, so magnanimously friendly! She could never forgive herself if he—he—the greatest, the best of men, were again rendered

unhappy in marriage by her imprudence (hers, who owed to him her all!)—yes, imprudent indeed, to have thrown right in his way a pretty coquettish girl ('for Caroline is coquettish, Mr. Darrell; most girls so pretty are at that silly age'). In short, she carried her point against all the eloquence Darrell could employ, and covered her designs by the semblance of the most delicate scruples, and the sacrifice of worldly advantages to the prudence which belongs to high principle and affectionate caution.

And what were Caroline's real sentiments for Guy Darrell? She understood them *now* on looking back. She saw herself as she was then—as she had stood under the beech-tree, when the heavenly pity that was at the core of her nature—when the venerating, grateful affection that had grown with her growth, made her yearn to be a solace and a joy to that grand and solitary life. Love him! O certainly she loved him, devotedly, fondly; but it was with the love of a child. She had not awakened then to the love of woman. Removed from his presence, suddenly thrown into the great world—yes, Darrell had sketched the picture with a stern, but not altogether an untruthful hand. He had not, however, fairly estimated the inevitable influence which a mother, such as Mrs. Lyndsay, would exercise over a girl so wholly inexperienced—so guileless, so unsuspecting, and so filially devoted. He could not appreciate—no man can—the mightiness of female cunning. He could not see how mesh upon mesh the soft Mrs. Lyndsay (pretty woman with pretty manners) wove her web round the "cousins," until Caroline, who at first had thought of the silent fair-haired young man only as the Head of her House, pleased with attentions that kept aloof admirers, of whom she thought Guy Darrell might be more reasonably jealous, was appalled to hear her mother tell her that she was either the most heartless of coquettes, or poor Montfort was the most ill-used of men. But at this time Jasper Losely, under his name of Hammond, brought his wife from the French town at which they had been residing since their marriage, to see Mrs. Lyndsay and Caroline at Paris, and implore their influence to obtain a reconciliation with her father. Matilda soon learned from Mrs. Lyndsay, who affected the most enchanting candour, the nature of the engagement between Caroline and Darrell. She communicated the information to

Jasper, who viewed it with very natural alarm. By reconciliation with Guy Darrell, Jasper understood something solid and practical—not a mere sentimental pardon, added to that paltry stipend of £700 a-year which he had just obtained—but the restoration to all her rights and expectancies of the heiress he had supposed himself to marry. He had by no means relinquished the belief that sooner or later Darrell would listen to the Voice of Nature, and settle all his fortune on his only child. But then for the Voice of Nature to have fair play, it was clear that there should be no other child to plead for. And if Darrell were to marry again and to have sons, what a dreadful dilemma it would be for the Voice of Nature! Jasper was not long in discovering that Caroline's engagement was not less unwelcome to Mrs. Lyndsay than to himself, and that she was disposed to connive at any means by which it might be annulled. Matilda was first employed to weaken the bond it was so desirable to sever. Matilda did not reproach, but she wept. She was sure *now* that she should be an outcast—her children beggars. Mrs. Lyndsay worked up this complaint with adroitest skill. Was Caroline sure that it was not most dishonourable—most treacherous—to rob her own earliest friend of the patrimony that would otherwise return to Matilda with Darrell's pardon? This idea became exquisitely painful to the high-spirited Caroline, but it could not counterpoise the conviction of the greater pain she should occasion to the breast that so confided in her faith, if that faith were broken. Step by step the intrigue against the absent one proceeded. Mrs. Lyndsay thoroughly understood the art of insinuating doubts. Guy Darrell, a man of the world, a cold-blooded lawyer, a busy politician, *he* break his heart for a girl! No, it was only the young, and especially the young when not remarkably clever, who broke their hearts for such trifles. Montfort, indeed—*there* was a man whose heart *could* be broken!—whose happiness *could* be blasted! Dear Guy Darrell had been only moved, in his proposals, by generosity. "Something, my dear child, in your own artles swords and manner, that made him fancy he had won your affections unknown to yourself!—an idea that he was bound as a gentleman to speak out! Just like him. He *has* that spirit of chivalry. But my belief is, that he is quite aware by this time how foolish such a marriage would be, and would

thank you heartily if, at the year's end, he found himself free, and you happily disposed of elsewhere, &c., &c. The drama advanced. Mrs. Lyndsay evinced decided pulmonary symptoms. Her hectic cough returned; she could not sleep; her days were numbered—a secret grief. Caroline implored frankness, and, clasped to her mother's bosom, and compassionately bedewed with tears, those hints were dropped into her ear which, though so worded as to show the most indulgent forbearance to Darrell, and rather, as if in compassion for his weakness than in abhorrence of his perfidy, made Caroline start with the indignation of revolted purity and outraged pride. "Were this true, all would be indeed at an end between us! But it is not true. Let it be proved." "But, my dear, dear child, I could not stir in a matter so delicate. I could not aid in breaking off a marriage so much to your worldly advantage, unless you could promise that, in rejecting Mr. Darrell, you would accept your cousin. In my wretched state of health, the anxious thought of leaving you in the world literally penniless would kill me at once."

"Oh, if Guy Darrell be false (but that is impossible!), do with me all you will; to obey and please you would be the only comfort left to me."

Thus was all prepared for the final *dénouement*. Mrs. Lyndsay had not gone so far without a reliance on the means to accomplish her object, and for these means she had stooped to be indebted to the more practical villany of Matilda's husband.

Jasper, in this visit to Paris, had first formed the connection, which completed the wickedness of his perverted nature, with that dark adventuress who has flitted shadow-like through part of this varying narrative. Gabrielle Desmarets was then in her youth, notorious only for the ruin she had inflicted on admiring victims, and the superb luxury with which she rioted on their plunder. Captivated by the personal advantages for which Jasper was then pre-eminently conspicuous, she willingly associated her fortunes with his own. Gabrielle was one of those incarnations of evil which no city but Paris can accomplish with the same epicurean refinement, and vitiate into the same cynical corruption. She was exceedingly witty, sharply astute, capable of acting any part, carrying out any plot; and when it pleased her to simulate the decorous and im-

maculate gentlewoman, she might have deceived the most experienced *roué*. Jasper presented this Artiste to his unsuspecting wife as a widow of rank, who was about to visit London, and who might be enabled to see Mr. Darrell, and intercede on their behalf. Matilda fell readily into the snare; the Frenchwoman went to London, with assumed name and title, and with servants completely in her confidence. And such (as the reader knows already) was that eloquent baroness who had pleaded to Darrell the cause of his penitent daughter! No doubt the wily *Parisienne* had calculated on the effect of her arts and her charms, to decoy him into at least a passing forgetfulness of his faith to another. But if she could not succeed there, it might equally achieve the object in view to obtain the credit of that success. Accordingly, she wrote to one of her friends at Paris, letters stating that she had found a very rich admirer in a celebrated English statesman, to whom she was indebted for her establishment, &c.; and alluding, in very witty and satirical terms, to his matrimonial engagement with the young English beauty at Paris, who was then creating such a sensation—an engagement of which she represented her admirer to be heartily sick, and extremely repentant. Without mentioning names, her descriptions were unmistakable. Jasper, of course, presented to Mrs. Lyndsay those letters (which, he said, the person to whom they were addressed had communicated to one of her own gay friends), and suggested that their evidence against Darrell would be complete in Miss Lyndsay's eyes if some one, whose veracity Caroline could not dispute, could corroborate the assertions of the letters; it would be quite enough to do so if Mr. Darrell were even seen entering or leaving the house of a person whose mode of life was so notorious. Mrs. Lyndsay, who, with her consummate craft, saved her dignity by affected blindness to the artifices at which she connived, declared that, in a matter of inquiry which involved the private character of a man so eminent, and to whom she owed so much, she would not trust his name to the gossip of others. She herself would go to London. She knew that odious, but too fascinating, Gabrielle by sight (as every one did who went to the opera or drove in the *Bois de Boulogne*). Jasper undertook that the *Parisienne* should show herself at her balcony at a certain day at a certain hour, and that at that hour Darrell

should call and be admitted; and Mrs. Lyndsay allowed that that evidence would suffice. Sensible of the power over Caroline that she would derive if, with her habits of languor and her delicate health, she could say that she had undertaken such a journey to be convinced with her own eyes of a charge which, if true, would influence her daughter's conduct and destiny—Mrs. Lyndsay did go to London—did see Gabrielle Desmarets at her balcony—did see Darrell enter the house; and on her return to Paris did, armed with this testimony, and with the letters that led to it, so work upon her daughter's mind, that the next day the Marquess of Montfort was accepted. But the year of Darrell's probation was nearly expired; all delay would be dangerous—all explanation would be fatal, and must be forestalled. Nor could a long courtship be kept secret; Darrell might hear of it, and come over at once; and the Marquess's ambitious kinsfolk would not fail to interfere if the news of his intended marriage with a portionless cousin reached their ears. Lord Montfort, who was awed by Carr, and extremely afraid of his grandmother, was not less anxious for secrecy and expedition than Mrs. Lyndsay herself.

Thus, then, Mrs. Lyndsay *triumphed*, and while her daughter was still under the influence of an excitement which clouded her judgment, and stung her into rashness of action as an escape from the torment of reflection—thus were solemnised Caroline's unhappy and splendid nuptials. The Marquess hired a villa in the delightful precincts of Fontainebleau for his honeymoon; that moon was still young when the Marquess said to himself, "I don't find that it produces honey." When he had first been attracted towards Caroline, she was all life and joy—too much of a child to pine for Darrell's absence, while credulously confident of their future union—her spirits naturally wild and lively, and the world, opening at her feet, so novel and so brilliant. This fresh gaiety had amused the Marquess—he felt cheated when he found it gone. Caroline might be gentle, docile, submissive; but those virtues, though of higher quality than glad animal spirits, are not so entertaining. His own exceeding sterility of mind and feeling was not apparent till in the *têtes-à-têtes* of conjugal life. A good-looking young man, with a thorough-bred air, who rides well, dances well, and holds his tongue, may, in all

mixed societies, pass for a shy youth of sensitive genius! But when he is your companion for life, and all to yourself, and you find that, when he does talk, he has neither an idea nor a sentiment—alas! alas for you, young bride, if you have ever known the charm of intellect, or the sweetness of sympathy. But it was not for Caroline to complain; struggling against her own weight of sorrow, she had no immediate perception of her companion's vapidity. It was he, poor man, who complained. He just detected enough of her superiority of intelligence to suspect that he was humiliated, while sure that he was bored. An incident converted his growing indifference into permanent dislike not many days after their marriage.

Lord Montfort, sauntering into Caroline's room, found her insensible on the floor—an open letter by her side. Summoning her maid to her assistance, he took the marital privilege of reading the letter, which had apparently caused her swoon. It was from Matilda, and written in a state of maddened excitement. Matilda had little enough of what is called heart; but she had an intense selfishness, which, in point of suffering, supplies the place of a heart. It was not because she could not feel for the wrongs of another that she could not feel anguish for her own. Arabella was avenged. The cold-blooded snake that had stung her met the fang of the cobra-capella. Matilda had learned from some anonymous correspondent (probably a rival of Gabrielle's), of Jasper's *liaison* with that adventuress. But half recovered from her confinement, she had risen from her bed—hurried to Paris (for the pleasures of which her husband had left her)—seen this wretched Gabrielle—recognised in her the false baroness to whom Jasper had presented her—to whom, by Jasper's dictation, she had written such affectionate letters—whom she had employed to plead her cause to her father;—seen Gabrielle—seen her at her own luxurious apartment, Jasper at home there—burst into vehement wrath—roused up the cobra-capella; and on declaring that she would separate from her husband, go back to her father, tell her wrongs, appeal to his mercy, Gabrielle calmly replied, "Do so, and I will take care that your father shall know that your plea for his pardon through Madame la Baronne was a scheme to blacken his name, and to frustrate his marriage. Do not think that he will suppose you did not connive at a

project so sly; he must know you too well, pretty innocent." No match for Gabrielle Desmarets, Matilda flung from the house, leaving Jasper whistling an air from *Figaro;* returned alone to the French town from which she now wrote to Caroline, pouring out her wrongs, and, without seeming sensible that Caroline had been wronged too, expressing her fear that her father might believe her an accomplice in Jasper's plot, and refuse her the means to live apart from the wretch, upon whom she heaped every epithet that just indignation could suggest to a feeble mind. The latter part of the letter, blurred and blotted, was incoherent, almost raving. In fact Matilda was then seized by the mortal illness which hurried her to the grave. To the Marquess much of this letter was extremely uninteresting—much of it quite incomprehensible. He could not see why it should so overpoweringly affect his wife. Only those passages which denounced a scheme to frustrate some marriage meditated by Mr. Darrell made him somewhat uneasy, and appeared to him to demand explanation. But Caroline, in the anguish to which she awakened, forestalled his inquiries. To her but two thoughts were present—how she had wronged Darrell—how ungrateful and faithless she must seem to him; and in the impulse of her remorse, and in the child-like candour of her soul, artlessly, ingenuously, she poured out her feelings to the husband she had taken as counsellor and guide, as if seeking to guard all her sorrow for the past from a sentiment that might render her less loyal to the responsibilities which linked her future to another's. A man of sense would have hailed in so noble a confidence (however it might have pained him for the time) a guarantee for the happiness and security of his whole existence. He would have seen how distinct from that ardent love which in Caroline's new relation of life would have bordered upon guilt and been cautious as guilt against disclosing its secrets, was the infantine, venerating affection she had felt for a man so far removed from her by years and the development of intellect—an affection which a young husband, trusted with every thought, every feeling, might reasonably hope to eclipse. A little forbearance, a little of delicate and generous tenderness, at that moment, would have secured to Lord Montfort the warm devotion of a grateful heart, in which the grief that overflowed was not

for the irreplaceable loss of an earlier lover, but the repentant shame for wrong and treachery to a confiding friend.

But it is in vain to ask from any man that which is not in him! Lord Montfort listened with sullen, stolid displeasure. That Caroline should feel the slightest pain at any cause which had cancelled her engagement to that odious Darrell, and had raised her to the rank of his Marchioness, was a crime in his eyes never to be expiated. He considered, not without reason, that Mrs. Lyndsay had shamefully deceived him; and fully believed that she had been an accomplice with Jasper in that artifice which he was quite gentleman enough to consider placed those who had planned it out of the pale of his acquaintance. And when Caroline, who had been weeping too vehemently to read her lord's countenance, came to a close, Lord Montfort took up his hat and said, "I beg never to hear again of this lawyer and his very disreputable family connections. As you say, you and your mother have behaved very ill to him; but you don't seem to understand that you have behaved much worse to me. As to condescending to write to him, and enter into explanations how you came to be Lady Montfort, it would be so lowering to me that I would never forgive it—never. I would just as soon that you run away at once;—sooner. As for Mrs. Lyndsay, I shall forbid her entering my house. When you have done crying, order your things to be packed up. I shall return to England to-morrow."

That was perhaps the longest speech Lord Montfort ever addressed to his wife; perhaps it was also the rudest. From that time he regarded her as some Spaniard of ancient days might regard a guest on whom he was compelled to bestow the rights of hospitality—to whom he gave a seat at his board, a chair at his hearth, but for whom he entertained a profound aversion, and kept at invincible distance, with all the ceremony of dignified dislike. Once only during her wedded life Caroline again saw Darrell. It was immediately on her return to England, and little more than a month after her marriage. It was the day on which Parliament had been prorogued preparatory to its dissolution—the last Parliament of which Guy Darrell was a member. Lady Montfort's carriage was detained in the throng with which the ceremonial had filled the streets,

and Darrell passed it on horseback. It was but one look in that one moment; and the look never ceased to haunt her—a look of such stern disdain, but also of such deep despair. No language can exaggerate the eloquence which there is in a human countenance, when a great and tortured spirit speaks out from it accusingly to a soul that comprehends. The crushed heart, the ravaged existence, were bared before her in that glance, as clearly as to a wanderer through the night are the rents of the precipice in the flash of the lightning. So they encountered—so, without a word, they parted. To him that moment decided the flight from active life to which his hopeless thoughts had of late been wooing the jaded, weary man. In safety to his very conscience, he would not risk the certainty thus to encounter one whom it convulsed his whole being to remember was another's wife. In that highest and narrowest sphere of the great London world to which Guy Darrell's political distinction condemned his social life, it was impossible but that he should be brought frequently into collision with Lord Montfort, the Head of a House with which Darrell himself was connected—the most powerful patrician of the party of which Darrell was so conspicuous a chief. Could he escape Lady Montfort's presence, her name at least would be continually in his ears. From that fatal beauty he could no more hide than from the sun.

This thought, and the terror it occasioned him, completed his resolve on the instant. The next day he was in the groves of Fawley, and amazed the world by dating from that retreat a farewell address to his constituents. A few days after, the news of his daughter's death reached him; and as that event became known it accounted to many for his retirement for a while from public life.

But to Caroline Montfort, and to her alone, the secret of a career blasted, a fame renounced, was unmistakably revealed. For a time she was tortured, in every society she entered, by speculation and gossip which brought before her the memory of his genius, the accusing sound of his name. But him, who withdraws himself from the world, the world soon forgets; and by degrees Darrell became as little spoken of as the dead.

Mrs. Lyndsay had never, during her schemes on Lord Montfort, abandoned her own original design on Darrell.

And when, to her infinite amaze and mortification, Lord Montfort, before the first month of his marriage expired, took care, in the fewest possible words, to dispel her dream of governing the House, and residing in the houses of Vipont, as the lawful regent during the life-long minority to which she had condemned both the submissive Caroline and the lethargic Marquess, she hastened by letter to exculpate herself to Darrell—laid, of course, all the blame on Caroline. Alas! had not she always warned him that Caroline was not worthy of him?—him, the greatest, the best of men, &c., &c. Darrell replied by a single cut of his trenchant sarcasm—sarcasm which shore through her cushion of down and her veil of gauze like the sword of Saladin. The old Marchioness turned her back upon Mrs. Lyndsay. Lady Selina was crushingly civil. The pretty woman with pretty manners, no better off for all the misery she had occasioned, went to Rome, caught cold, and having no one to nurse her as Caroline had done, fell at last into a real consumption, and faded out of the world elegantly and spitefully, as fades a rose that still leaves its thorns behind it.

Caroline's nature grew developed and exalted by the responsibilities she had accepted, and by the purity of her grief. She submitted, as a just retribution, to the solitude and humiliation of her wedded lot; she earnestly, virtuously strove to banish from her heart every sentiment that could recall to her more of Darrell than the remorse of having darkened a life that had been to her childhood so benignant, and to her youth, so confiding. As we have seen her, at the mention of Darrell's name—at the allusion to his griefs —fly to the side of her ungenial lord, though he was to her but as the owner of the name she bore,—so it was the saving impulse of a delicate, watchful conscience that kept her as honest in thought as she was irreproachable in conduct. But vainly, in summoning her intellect to the relief of her heart—vainly had she sought to find in the world friendships, companionships, that might eclipse the memory of the mind so lofty in its antique mould—so tender in its depths of unsuspected sweetness—which had been withdrawn from her existence before she could fully comprehend its rarity, or appreciate its worth.

At last she became free once more; and then she had dared thoroughly to examine into her own heart, and into

the nature of that hold which the image of Darrell still retained on its remembrances. And precisely because she was convinced that she had succeeded in preserving her old childish affection for him free from the growth into that warm love which would have been guilt if so encouraged, she felt the more free to volunteer the atonement which might permit her to dedicate herself to his remaining years. Thus, one day, after a conversation with Alban Morley, in which Alban had spoken of Darrell as the friend, almost the virtual guardian, of her infancy; and, alluding to a few lines just received from him, brought vividly before Caroline the picture of Darrell's melancholy wanderings and blighted life,—thus had she, on the impulse of the moment, written the letter which had reached Darrell at Malta. In it she referred but indirectly to the deceit that had been practised on herself—far too delicate to retail a scandal which she felt to be an insult to his dignity, in which, too, the deceiving parties were his daughter's husband and her own mother. No doubt every true woman can understand why she thus wrote to Darrell, and every true man can equally comprehend why that letter failed in its object, and was returned to her in scorn. Hers was the yearning of meek, passionless affection, and his the rebuke of sensitive, embittered, indignant love.

But now, as all her past, with its interior life, glided before her, by a grief the most intolerable she had yet known, the woman became aware that it was no longer penitence for the injured friend—it was despair for the lover she had lost. In that stormy interview, out of all the confused and struggling elements of her life-long, self-reproach, LOVE—the love of woman—had flashed suddenly, luminously, as the love of youth at first sight. Strange—but the very disparity of years seemed gone! She, the matured, sorrowful woman, was so much nearer to the man, still young in heart, and little changed in person than the gay girl of seventeen had been to the grave friend of forty! Strange, but those vehement reproaches had wakened emotions deeper in the core of the wild mortal breast than all that early chivalrous homage which had exalted her into the ideal of dreaming poets. Strange, strange, strange! But where there is nothing strange, *there*—is there ever love?

And with this revelation of her own altered heart, came

the clearer and fresher insight into the nature and character of the man she loved. Hitherto she had recognised but his virtues—now she beheld his failings! beholding them *as if virtues*, loved him more; and, loving him, more despaired. She recognised that all-pervading indomitable pride, which, interwoven with his sense of honour, became as relentless as it was unrevengeful. She comprehended now, that the more he loved her, the less he would forgive; and, recalling the unexpected gentleness of his farewell words, she felt that, in his promised blessing, lay the sentence that annihilated every hope.

CHAPTER III.

Whatever the number of a man's friends, there will be times in his life when he has one too few; but if he has only one enemy, he is lucky indeed if he has not one too many.

A cold night; sharp frost; winter set in. The shutters are closed, the curtains drawn, the fire burns clear, and the lights are softly shaded in Alban Morley's drawing-room. The old bachelor is at home again. He had returned that day; sent to Lionel to come to him; and Lionel had already told him what had transpired in his absence—from the identification of Waife with William Losely, to Lady Montfort's visit to Fawley, which had taken place two days before, and of which she had informed Lionel by a few hasty lines, stating her inability to soften Mr. Darrell's objections to the alliance between Lionel and Sophy; severely blaming herself that those objections had not more forcibly presented themselves to her own mind, and concluding with expressions of sympathy, and appeals to fortitude, in which, however brief, the exquisite kindness of her nature so diffused its charm, that the soft words soothed insensibly, like those sounds which in Nature itself do soothe us we know not why.

The poor Colonel found himself in the midst of painful subjects. Though he had no very keen sympathy for the sorrows of lovers, and no credulous faith in everlasting attachments, Lionel's portraiture of the young girl, who formed so mysterious a link between the two men who, in varying ways, had touched the finest springs in his own heart, compelled a compassionate and chivalrous interest,

and he was deeply impressed by the quiet of Lionel's dejection. The young man uttered no complaints of the inflexibility with which Darrell had destroyed his elysium. He bowed to the will with which it was in vain to argue, and which it would have been a criminal ingratitude to defy. But his youth seemed withered up; down-eyed and listless he sank into that stupor of despondency which so drearily simulates the calm of resignation.

"I have but one wish now," said he, "and that is to change at once into some regiment on active service. I do not talk of courting danger and seeking death. That would be either a senseless common-place, or a threat, as it were, to Heaven! But I need some vehemence of action—some positive and irresistible call upon honour or duty that may force me to contend against this strange heaviness that settles down on my whole life. Therefore, I entreat you so to arrange for me, and break it to Mr. Darrell in such terms as may not needlessly pain him by the obtrusion of my sufferings. For, while I know him well enough to be convinced that nothing could move him from resolves in which he had entrenched, as in a citadel, his pride or his creed of honour, I am sure that he would take into his own heart all the grief which those resolves occasioned to another's."

"You do him justice there," cried Alban; you are a noble fellow to understand him so well! Sir, you have in you the stuff that makes English gentlemen such generous soldiers."

"Action, action, action," exclaimed Lionel. "Strife, strife! No other chance of cure. Rest is so crushing, solitude so dismal."

Lo! how contrasted the effect of a similar cause of grief at different stages of life! Chase the first day-dreams of our youth, and we cry, "Action—Strife!" In that cry, unconsciously to ourselves, HOPE speaks and proffers worlds of emotion not yet exhausted. Disperse the last golden illusion in which the image of happiness cheats our experienced manhood, and HOPE is silent; she has no more worlds to offer—unless, indeed, she drop her earthly attributes, change her less solemn name, and float far out of sight as "FAITH!"

Alban made no immediate reply to Lionel; but, seating himself still more comfortably in his chair—planting his

feet still more at ease upon his fender—the kindly Man of the World silently revolved all the possible means by which Darrell might yet be softened and Lionel rendered happy. His reflections dismayed him. "Was there ever such untoward luck," he said at last, and peevishly, "that out of the whole world you should fall in love with the very girl against whom Darrell's feelings (prejudices if you please) must be mailed in adamant! Convinced, and apparently with every reason, that she is not his daughter's child, but however innocently, an impostor, how can he receive her as his young kinsman's bride! How can we expect it?"

"But," said Lionel, "if, on farther investigation, she prove to be his daughter's child—the sole surviving representative of his line and name?"

"*His* name! No! Of the name of Losely—the name of that turbulent sharper who may yet die on the gibbet—of that poor, dear, lovable rascal Willy, who was goose enough to get himself transported for robbery!—a felon's grandchild the representative of Darrell's line! But how on earth came Lady Montfort to favour so wild a project, and encourage you to share in it?—she who ought to have known Darrell better?"

"Alas! she saw but Sophy's exquisite, simple virtues, and inborn grace; and, believing her claim to Darrell's lineage, Lady Montfort thought but of the joy and blessing one so good and so loving might bring to his joyless hearth. She was not thinking of morbid pride and mouldering ancestors, but of soothing charities and loving ties. And Lady Montfort, I now suspect, in her scheme for our happiness—for Darrell's—had an interest which involved her own!"

"Her own!"

"Yes; I see it all now."

"See what? you puzzle me."

"I told you that Darrell, in his letter to me, wrote with great bitterness of Lady Montfort."

"Very natural that he should. Who would not resent such interference?"

"Listen. I told you that, at his own command, I sent to her that letter; that she, on receiving it, went herself to Fawley, to plead our cause. I was sanguine of the result."

"Why?"

"Because he who is in love has a wondrous intuition into all the mysteries of love in others; and when I read Darrell's letter, I felt sure that he had once loved—loved still, perhaps—the woman he so vehemently reproached."

"Ha!" said the Man of the World, intimate with Guy Darrell from his school-days—"Ha! is it possible! And they say that I know everything! You were sanguine,—I understand. Yes, if your belief were true—if there were some old attachment that could be revived—some old misunderstanding explained away—stop; let me think. True, true—it was just after her marriage that he fled from the world. Ah, my dear Lionel; light, light! light dawns on me! Not without reason were you sanguine. Your hand, my dear boy; I see hope for you at last. For if the sole reason that prevented Darrell contracting a second marriage was the unconquered memory of a woman like Lady Montfort (where, indeed, her equal in beauty, in dispositions so akin to his own ideal of womanly excellence?)—and if she too has some correspondent sentiment for him, why, then, indeed you might lose all chance of being Darrell's sole heir; your Sophy might forfeit the hateful claim to be the sole scion on his ancient tree; but it is precisely by those losses that Lionel Haughton might gain the bride he covets; and if this girl prove to be what these Loselys affirm, that very marriage, which is now so repugnant to Darrell, ought to insure his blessing. Were he himself to marry again—had he rightful representatives and heirs in his own sons—he should rejoice in the nuptials that secured to his daughter's child so honourable a name and so tender a protector. And as for inheritance, you have not been reared to expect it; you have never counted on it. You would receive a fortune sufficiently ample to restore your ancestral station; your career will add honours to fortune. Yes, yes; that is the sole way out of all these difficulties. Darrell must marry again; Lady Montfort must be his wife. Lionel shall be free to choose her whom Lady Montfort approves—be friends—no matter what her birth; and I—I—Alban Morley—shall have an arm-chair by two smiling hearths."

At this moment there was heard a violent ring at the bell, a loud knock at the street door; and presently, following close on the servant, and pushing him aside as he

asked what name to announce, a woman, severely dressed in iron-grey, with a strongly-marked and haggard countenance, hurried into the room, and, striding right up to Alban Morley, as he rose from his seat, grasped his arm, and whispered into his ear, "Lose not a minute—come with me instantly—as you value the safety, perhaps the life, of Guy Darrell!"

"Guy Darrell!" exclaimed Lionel, overhearing her, despite the undertones of her voice.

"Who are you?" she said, turning fiercely; "are you one of his family?"

"His kinsman—almost his adopted son—Mr. Lionel Haughton," said the Colonel. "But pardon me, madam—who are you?"

"Do you not remember me? Yet you were so often in Darrell's house that you must have seen my face, as you have learned from your friend how little cause I have to care for him or his. Look again; I am that Arabella Fossett who—"

"Ah, I remember now; but—"

"But I tell you that Darrell is in danger, and this night. Take money; to be in time you must hire a special train. Take arms, though to be used only in self-defence. Take your servant if he is brave. This young kinsman—let him come too. There is only one man to resist; but that man," she said, with a wild kind of pride, "would have the strength and courage of ten, were his cause not that which may make the strong man weak, and the bold man craven. It is not a matter for the officers of justice, for law, for scandal; the service is to be done in secret, by friends, by kinsmen; for the danger that threatens Darrell—stoop—stoop, Colonel Morley—close in your ear;" and into his ear she hissed, "for the danger that threatens Darrell in his house this night is from the man whose name his daughter bore. That is why I come to you. To you I need not say, 'Spare his life—Jasper Losely's life.' Jasper Losely's death as a midnight robber would be Darrell's intolerable shame! Quick, quick, quick!—come, come!"

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

Brute-Force.

We left Jasper Losely resting for the night at the small town near Fawley. The next morning he walked on to the old Manor-house. It was the same morning in which Lady Montfort had held her painful interview with Darrell; and just when Losely neared the gate that led into the small park, he saw her re-enter the hired vehicle in waiting for her. As the carriage rapidly drove past the miscreant, Lady Montfort looked forth from the window to snatch a last look at the scenes still so dear to her, through eyes blinded by despairing tears. Jasper thus caught sight of her countenance, and recognised her, though she did not even notice him. Surprised at the sight, he halted by the palings. What could have brought Lady Montfort there? Could the intimacy his fraud had broken off so many years ago be renewed? If so, why the extreme sadness so evident on the face of which he had caught but a hurried, rapid glance? Be that as it might, it was no longer of the interest to him it had once been; and after pondering on the circumstance a minute or two, he advanced to the gate. But while his hand was on the latch, he again paused; how should he obtain admission to Darrell?—how announce himself? If in his own name, would not exclusion be certain?—if as a stranger on business, would Darrell be sure to receive him? As he was thus cogitating, his ear, which, with all his other organs of sense, was constitutionally fine as a savage's, caught sound of a faint rustle among the boughs of a thick copse which covered a part of the little park, terminating at its pales. The rustle came nearer and nearer; the branches were rudely displaced; and in a few moments more Guy Darrell himself came out from the copse, close by the gate, and opening it quickly, stood face to face with his abhorrent son-in-law. Jasper

was startled, but the opportunity was not to be lost. "Mr. Darrell," he said, "I come here again to see you; vouchsafe me, this time, a calmer hearing." So changed was Losely, so absorbed in his own emotions Darrell, that the words did not at once waken up remembrance. "Another time," said Darrell, hastily moving on into the road; "I am not at leisure now."

"Pardon me, *now*," said Losely, unconsciously bringing himself back to the tones and bearing of his earlier and more civilised years. "You do not remember me, sir; no wonder. But my name is Jasper Losely."

Darrell halted; then, still as if spellbound, looked fixedly at the broad-shouldered, burly frame before him, cased in its coarse pea-jacket, and in that rude form, and that defeatured, bloated face, detected, though with strong effort, the wrecks of the masculine beauty which had ensnared his deceitful daughter. Jasper could not have selected a more unpropitious moment for his cause. Darrell was still too much under the influence of recent excitement and immense sorrow for that supremacy of prudence over passion which could alone have made him a willing listener to overtures from Jasper Losely. And about the man whose connection with himself was a thought of such bitter shame, there was now so unmistakably the air of settled degradation, that all Darrell's instincts of gentleman were revolted—just at the very time, too, when his pride had been most chafed and assailed by the obtrusion of all that rendered most galling to him the very name of Jasper Losely. What! was it that man's asserted child whom Lionel Haughton desired as a wife?—was the alliance with that man to be thus renewed and strengthened?—that man have another claim to him and his in right of parentage to the bride of his nearest kinsman? What! was it that man's child whom he was asked to recognise as of his own flesh and blood?—the last representative of his line? That man!—*that!* A flash shot from his bright eye, deepening its grey into dark; and, turning on his heel, Darrell said, through his compressed lips—

"You have heard, sir, I believe, through Colonel Morley, that only on condition of your permanent settlement in one of our distant colonies, or America if you prefer it, would I consent to assist you. I am of the same mind still. I cannot parley with you myself. Colonel Morley

is abroad, I believe. I refer you to my solicitor; you have seen him years ago; you know his address. No more, sir."

"This will not do, Mr. Darrell," said Losely, doggedly; and, planting himself right before Darrell's way, "I have come here on purpose to have all differences out with you, face to face—and I will——"

"You will!" said Darrell, pale with haughty anger, and with the impulse of his passion, his hand clenched. In the bravery of his nature, and the warmth of a temper constitutionally quick, he thought nothing of the strength and bulk of the insolent obtruder—nothing of the peril of odds so unequal in a personal encounter. But the dignity which pervaded all his habits, and often supplied to him the place of discretion, came, happily for himself, to his aid now. *He* strike a man whom he so despised!—he raise that man to his own level by the honour of a blow from his hand! Impossible! "You will!" he said. "Well, be it so. Are you come again to tell me that a child of my daughter lives, and that you won my daughter's fortune by a deliberate lie?"

"I am not come to speak of that girl, but of myself. I say that I have a claim on you, Mr. Darrell; I say that, turn and twist the truth as you will, you are still my father-in-law, and that it is intolerable that I should be wanting bread, or driven into actual robbery, while my wife's father is a man of countless wealth, and has no heir except—but I will not now urge that child's cause; I am content to abandon it if so obnoxious to you. Do you wish me to cut a throat, and to be hanged, and all the world to hear the last dying speech and confession of Guy Darrell's son-in-law? Answer me, sir?"

"I answer you briefly and plainly. It is simply because I would not have that last disgrace on Guy Darrell's name that I offer you a subsistence in lands where you will be less exposed to those temptations which induced you to invest the sums that, by your own tale, had been obtained from me on false pretences, in the sink of a Paris gambling-house. A subsistence that, if it does not pamper vice, at least places you beyond the necessity of crime, is at your option. Choose it or reject it as you will."

"Look you, Mr. Darrell," said Jasper, whose temper was fast giving way beneath the cold and galling scorn with

which he was thus cast aside, "I am in a state so desperate, that, rather than starve, I may take what you so contemptuously fling to—your daughter's husband; but—"

"Knave!" cried Darrell, interrupting him, "do you again and again urge it as a claim upon me, that you decoyed from her home, under a false name, my only child; that she died in a foreign land—broken-hearted, if I have rightly heard: is that a claim upon your duped victim's father?"

"It seems so, since your pride is compelled to own that the world would deem it one; if the jail chaplain took down the last words of your son-in-law! But, *basta, basta!* hear me out, and spare hard names; for the blood is mounting into my brain, and I may become dangerous. Had any other man eyed, and scoffed, and railed at me as you have done, he would be lying dead and dumb as this stone at my foot; but you—are my father-in-law! Now, I care not to bargain with you what be the precise amount of my stipend if I obey your wish, and settle miserably in one of those raw, comfortless corners into which they who burthen this Old World are thrust out of sight. I would rather live my time out in this country—live it out in peace and for half what you may agree to give in transporting me. If you are to do anything for me, you had better do it so as to make me contented on easy terms to your own pockets, rather than to leave me dissatisfied, and willing to annoy you, which I could do somehow or other, even on the far side of the Herring Pond. I might keep to the letter of a bargain, live in Melbourne or Sydney, and take your money, and yet molest and trouble you by deputy. That girl, for instance—your grandchild; well, well, disown her if you please; but if I find out where she is, which I own I have not done yet, I might contrive to render her the plague of your life, even though I were in Australia."

"Ay," said Darrell, murmuring—"ay, ay; but"—(suddenly gathering himself up)—"No! Man, if she were my grandchild, your own child, could you talk of her thus?—make her the object of so base a traffic, and such miserable threats? Wicked though you be, this were against nature!—even in nature's wickedness—even in the son of a felon, and in the sharper of a hell. Pooh! I despise your malice. I will listen to you no longer. Out of my path."

"No!"

"No?"

"No, Guy Darrell, I have not yet done; you shall hear my terms, and accept them—a moderate sum down; say a few hundreds, and two hundred a-year to spend in London as I will—but out of your beat, out of your sight and hearing. Grant this, and I will never cross you again—never attempt to find, and, if I find by chance, never claim as my child by your daughter that wandering girl. I will never shame you by naming our connection. I will not offend the law, nor die by the hangman; yet I shall not live long, for I suffer much, and I drink hard."

The last words were spoken gloomily, not altogether without a strange dreary pathos. And amidst all his just scorn and anger, the large human heart of Guy Darrell was for the moment touched. He was silent—his mind hesitated; would it not be well—would it not be just as safe to his own peace, and to that of the poor child, whom, no matter what her parentage, Darrell could not but desire to free from the claim set up by so bold a ruffian, to gratify Losely's wish, and let him remain in England, upon an allowance that would suffice for his subsistence? Unluckily for Jasper, it was while this doubt passed through Darrell's relenting mind, that the miscreant, who was shrewd enough to see that he had gained ground, but too coarse of apprehension to ascribe his advantage to its right cause, thought to strengthen his case by additional arguments. "You see, sir," resumed Jasper, in almost familiar accents, "that there is no dog so toothless but what he can bite, and no dog so savage but what, if you give him plenty to eat, he will serve you."

Darrell looked up, and his brow slowly darkened.

Jasper continued—"I have hinted how I might plague you; perhaps, on the other hand, I might do you a good turn with that handsome lady who drove from your park-gate as I came up. Ah! you were once to have been married to her. I read in the newspapers that she has become a widow: you may marry her yet. There was a story against you once; her mother made use of it, and broke off an old engagement. I can set that story right."

"You can," said Darrell, with that exceeding calmness which comes from exceeding wrath; "and, perhaps, sir, that story, whatever it might be, you invented. No dog so toothless as not to bite—eh sir?"

"Well," returned Jasper, mistaking Darrell's composure, "at that time certainly it seemed my interest that you should not marry again; but *basta! basta!* enough of bygones. If I bit once, I will serve now. Come, sir, you are a man of the world, let us close the bargain."

All Darrell's soul was now up in arms. What, then! this infamous wretch was the author of the tale by which the woman he had loved, as woman never was loved before, had excused her breach of faith, and been lost to him for ever? And he learned this, while yet fresh from her presence—fresh from the agonising conviction that his heart loved still, but could not pardon. With a spring so sudden that it took Losely utterly by surprise, he leaped on the bravo, swung aside that huge bulk which Jasper had boasted four draymen could not stir against its will, cleared his way; and turning back before Losely had recovered his amaze, cried out, "Execrable villain! I revoke every offer to aid a life that has existed but to darken and desolate those it was permitted to approach. Starve or rob! perish miserably! And if I pour not on your head my parting curse, it is only because I know that man has no right to curse; and casting you back on your own evil self is the sole revenge which my belief in Heaven permits me."

Thus saying, Darrell strode on—swiftly, but not as one who flies. Jasper made three long bounds, and was almost at his side, when he was startled by the explosion of a gun. A pheasant fell dead on the road, and Darrell's gamekeeper, gun in hand, came through a gap in the hedge opposite the park-pales, and seeing his master close before him, approached to apologise for the suddenness of the shot.

Whatever Losely's intention in hastening after Darrell, he had no option now but to relinquish it, and drop back. The village itself was not many hundred yards distant; and, after all, what good in violence, except the gratified rage of the moment? Violence would not give to Jasper Losely the income that had just been within his grasp, and had so unexpectedly eluded it. He remained, therefore, in the lane, standing still, and seeing Darrell turn quietly into his park through another gate close to the manor-house. The gamekeeper, meanwhile, picked up his bird, reloaded his gun, and eyed Jasper suspiciously askant. The baffled gladiator at length turned and walked slowly back to the

town he had left. It was late in the afternoon when he once more gained his corner in the coffee-room of his commercial inn; and, to his annoyance, the room was crowded—it was market-day. Farmers, their business over, came in and out in quick succession; those who did not dine at the ordinaries, taking their hasty snack, or stirrup-cup, while their horses were being saddled; others to look at the newspaper, or exchange a word on the state of markets and the nation. Jasper, wearied and sullen, had to wait for the refreshments he ordered, and meanwhile fell into a sort of half doze, as was not now unusual in him in the intervals between food and mischief. From this creeping torpor he was suddenly roused by the sound of Darrell's name. Three farmers standing close beside him, their backs to the fire, were tenants to Darrell—two of them on the lands that Darrell had purchased in the years of his territorial ambition; the third resided in the hamlet of Fawley, and rented the larger portion of the comparatively barren acres to which the old patrimonial estate was circumscribed. These farmers were talking of their Squire's return to the county—of his sequestered mode of life—of his peculiar habits—of the great unfinished house which was left to rot. The Fawley tenant then said that it might not be left to rot after all, and that the village workmen had been lately employed, and still were, in getting some of the rooms into rough order; and then he spoke of the long gallery in which the Squire had been arranging his fine pictures, and how he had run up a passage between that gallery and his own room, and how he would spend hours at day, and night too, in that awful long room as lone as a churchyard; and that Mr. Mills had said that his master now lived almost entirely either in that gallery or in the room in the roof of the old house—quite cut off, as you might say, except from the eyes of those dead pictures, or the rats, which had grown so excited at having their quarters in the new building invaded, that if you peeped in at the windows in moonlit nights you might see them in dozens, sitting on their haunches, as if holding council, or peering at the curious old things which lay beside the crates out of which they had been taken. Then the rustic gossips went on to talk of the rent-day which was at hand—of the audit feast, which, according to immemorial custom, was given at the old Manor-house on that same

rent-day—supposed that Mr. Fairthorn would preside—that the Squire himself would not appear—made some incidental observations on their respective rents and wheat-crops—remarked that they should have a good moonlight for their ride back from the audit feast—cautioned each other, laughing, not to drink too much of Mr. Fairthorn's punch—and finally went their way, leaving on the mind of Jasper Losely—who, leaning his scheming head on his powerful hand, had appeared in dull sleep all the while—these two facts: 1st, That on the third day from that which was then declining, sums amounting to thousands would find their way into Fawley Manor-house; and, 2dly, That a communication existed between the unfinished, uninhabited building, and Darrell's own solitary chamber. As soon as he had fortified himself by food and drink, Jasper rose, paid for his refreshments, and walked forth. Noiseless and rapid, skirting the hedgerows by the lane that led to Fawley, and scarcely distinguishable under their shadow, the human wild-beast strided on in scent of its quarry. It was night when Jasper once more reached the moss-grown pales round the demesnes of the old Manor-house. In a few minutes he was standing under the black shadow of the buttresses to the unfinished pile. His object was not, then, to assault, but to reconnoitre. He prowled round the irregular walls, guided in his survey, now and then, faintly by the stars—more constantly and clearly by the lights from the contiguous Manor-house—especially the light from that high chamber in the gable, close by which ran the thin framework of wood which linked the two buildings of stone, just as any frail scheme links together the Past which man has not enjoyed, with the Future he will not complete. Jasper came to a large bay unglazed window, its sill but a few feet from the ground, from which the boards, nailed across the mullions, had been removed by the workmen, whom Darrell had employed on the interior, and were replaced but by a loose tarpaulin. Pulling aside this slight obstacle, Jasper had no difficulty in entering through the wide mullions into the dreary edifice. Finding himself in profound darkness, he had recourse to a lucifer-box which he had about him, and the waste of a dozen matches sufficed him to examine the ground. He was in a space intended by the architect for the principal staircase; a tall ladder, used by the recent

workmen, was still left standing against the wall, the top of it resting on a landing-place opposite a doorway, that, from the richness of its half-finished architrave, obviously led to what had been designed for the state apartments; between the pediments was a slight temporary door of rough deal planks. Satisfied with his reconnoitre, Losely quitted the skeleton pile, and retraced his steps to the inn he had left. His musings by the way suggested to him the expediency, nay, the necessity of an accomplice. Implements might be needed—disguises would be required—swift horses for flight to be hired—and, should the robbery succeed, the bulk of the spoil would be no doubt in bank-notes, which it would need some other hand than his own to dispose of, either at the bank next morning at the earliest hour, or by transmission abroad. For help in all this Jasper knew no one to compare to Cutts; nor did he suspect his old ally of any share in the conspiracy against him, of which he had been warned by Mrs. Crane. Resolving, therefore, to admit that long-tried friend into his confidence, and a share of the spoils, he quickened his pace, arrived at the railway station in time for a late train to London, and, disdainful of the dangers by which he was threatened in return to any of the haunts of his late associates, gained the dark court wherein he had effected a lodgment on the night of his return to London, and roused Cutts from his slumbers with tales of an enterprise so promising, that the small man began to recover his ancient admiration for the genius to which he had bowed at Paris, but which had fallen into his contempt in London.

Mr. Cutts held a very peculiar position in that section of the great world to which he belonged. He possessed the advantage of an education superior to that of the generality of his companions, having been originally a clerk to an Old Bailey attorney, and having since that early day accomplished his natural shrewdness by a variety of speculative enterprises both at home and abroad. In these adventures he had not only contrived to make money, but, what is very rare with the foes of law, to save it. Being a bachelor, he was at small expenses, but besides his bachelor's lodging in the dark court, he had an establishment in the heart of the City, near the Thames, which was intrusted to the care of a maiden sister, as covetous and as crafty as himself. At this establishment, ostensibly a pawnbroker's, were received

the goods which Cutts knew at his residence in the court were to be sold a bargain, having been obtained for nothing. It was chiefly by this business that the man had enriched himself. But his net was one that took in fishes of all kinds. He was a general adviser to the invaders of law. If he shared in the schemes he advised, they were so sure to be successful, that he enjoyed the highest reputation for luck. It was but seldom that he did actively share in those schemes—lucky in what he shunned as in what he performed. He had made no untruthful boast to Mrs. Crane of the skill with which he had kept himself out of the fangs of justice. With a certain portion of the police he was indeed rather a favourite; for was anything mysteriously "lost," for which the owner would give a reward equal to its value in legal markets, Cutts was the man who would get it back. Of violence he had a wholesome dislike; not that he did not admire force in others—not that he was physically a coward—but that caution was his predominant characteristic. He employed force when required—set a just value on it—would plan a burglary, and dispose of the spoils; but it was only where the prize was great and the danger small, that he lent his hand to the work that his brain approved. When Losely proposed to him the robbery of a lone country-house, in which Jasper, making light of all perils, brought prominently forward the images of some thousands of pounds in gold and notes, guarded by an elderly gentleman, and to be approached with ease through an uninhabited building—Cutts thought it well worth personal investigation. Nor did he consider himself bound, by his general engagement to Mrs. Crane, to lose the chance of a sum so immeasurably greater than he could expect to obtain from her by revealing the plot and taking measures to frustrate it. Cutts was a most faithful and intelligent agent when he was properly paid, and had proved himself so to Mrs. Crane on various occasions. But then, to be paid *properly* meant a gain greater in serving than he could get in not serving. Hitherto it had been extremely lucrative to obey Mrs. Crane in saving Jasper from crime and danger. In this instance the lucre seemed all the other way. Accordingly, the next morning, having filled a saddle-bag with sundry necessaries, such as files, picklocks, masks—to which he added a choice selection of political tracts and newspapers—he and Jasper set

out on two hired but strong and fleet hackneys to the neighbourhood of Fawley. They put up at a town on the other side of the Manor-house from that by which Jasper had approached it, and at about the same distance After baiting their steeds, they proceeded to Fawley by the silent guide of a finger-post, gained the vicinity of tho park, and Cutts, dismounting, flitted across the turf, and plunged himself into the hollows of the unfinished mansion, while Jasper took charge of the horses in a corner of the wooded lane. Cutts, pleased by the survey of the forlorn interior, ventured, in the stillness that reigned around, to mount the ladder, to apply a picklock to the door above, and opening this with ease, crept into the long gallery, its walls covered with pictures. Through the crevices in another door at the extreme end, gleamed a faint light. Cutts applied his eye to the chinks and keyhole, and saw that the light came from a room on the other side the narrow passage which connected the new house with the old. The door of that room was open, candles were on the table, and beside the table Cutts could distinguish the outline of a man's form seated—doubtless the owner; but the form did not seem "elderly." If inferior to Jasper's in physical power, it still was that of vigorous and unbroken manhood. Cutts did not like the appearance of that form, and he retreated to outer air with some misgivings. However, on rejoining Losely, he said, "As yet things look promising—place still as death—only one door locked, and that, the common country lock, which a schoolboy might pick with his knife."

"Or a crooked nail," said Jasper.

"Ay, no better picklock in good hands. But there are other things besides locks to think of."

Cutts then hurried on to suggest that it was just the hour when some of the workmen employed on the premises might be found in the Fawley public-house; that he should ride on, dismount there, and take his chance of picking up details of useful information as to localities and household. He should represent himself as a commercial traveller on his road to the town they had quitted; he should talk politics—all workmen love politics, especially the politics of cheap newspapers and tracts. He would rejoin Losely in an hour or so.

The bravo waited—his horse grazed—the moon came forth, stealing through the trees, bringing into fantastic light the melancholy old dwelling-house—the yet more melancholy new pile. Jasper was not, as we have seen, without certain superstitious fancies, and they had grown on him more of late as his brain had become chronically heated and his nerves relaxed by pain. He began to feel the awe of the silence and the moonlight; and some vague remembrances of earlier guiltless days—of a father's genial love—of joyous sensations in the priceless possession of youth and vigour—of the admiring smiles and cordial hands which his beauty, his daring, and high spirits had attracted towards him—of the all that he had been, mixed with the consciousness of what he was, and an uneasy conjecture of the probable depth of the final fall—came dimly over his thoughts, and seemed like the whispers of remorse. But it is rarely that man continues to lay blame on himself; and Jasper hastened to do, as many a better person does without a blush for his folly—viz., shift upon the innocent shoulders of fellow-men, or on the hazy outlines of that clouded form which ancient schools and modern plagiarists call sometimes "Circumstance," sometimes "Chance," sometimes "Fate," all the guilt due to his own wilful abuse of irrevocable hours.

With this consolatory creed, came of necessity—the devil's grand luxury, Revenge. Say to yourself, "For what I suffer I condemn another man, or I accuse the Arch-Invisible, be it a Destiny, be it a Maker!" and the logical sequel is to add evil to evil, folly to folly—to retort on the man who so wrongs, or on the Arch-Invisible who so afflicts you. Of all our passions, is not Revenge, the one into which enters with the most zest, a devil? For what is a devil?—A being whose sole work on earth is some revenge on God!

Jasper Losely was not by temperament vindictive; he was irascible, as the vain are—combative, aggressive, turbulent, by the impulse of animal spirits; but the premeditation of vengeance was foreign to a levity and egotism which abjured the self-sacrifice that is equally necessary to hatred as to love. But Guy Darrell had forced into his moral system a passion not native to it. Jasper had expected so much from his marriage with the great man's daughter—counted so thoroughly on her power to obtain

pardon and confer wealth—and his disappointment had been so keen—been accompanied with such mortification—that he regarded the man whom he had most injured as the man who had most injured him. But not till now did his angry feelings assume the shape of a definite vengeance. So long as there was a chance that he could extort from Darrell the money that was the essential necessary to his life, he checked his thoughts whenever they suggested a profitless gratification of rage. But now that Darrell had so scornfully and so inexorably spurned all concession—now that nothing was to be wrung from him except by force—force and vengeance came together in his projects. And yet, even in the daring outrage he was meditating, murder itself did not stand out as a thought accepted—no; what pleased his wild and turbid imagination was the idea of humiliating by terror the man who had humbled him by disdain. To penetrate into the home of this haughty scorner—to confront him in his own chamber at the dead of night, man to man, force to force; to say to him, "None now can deliver you from me—I come no more as a suppliant—I command you to accept my terms;" to gloat over the fears which, the strong man felt assured, would bow the rich man to beg for mercy at his feet;—this was the picture which Jasper Losely conjured up; and even the spoil to be won by violence smiled on him less than the grand position which the violence itself would bestow. Are not nine murders out of ten fashioned thus from conception into deed? "Oh that my enemy were but before me face to face—none to part us!" says the vindictive dreamer. Well, and what then? *There*, his imagination halts—there he drops the sable curtain; he goes not on to say, "Why, *then* another murder will be added to the long catalogue from Cain." He palters with his deadly wish, and mutters, perhaps, at most, "Why, *then*—come what may!"

Losely continued to gaze on the pale walls gleaming through the wintry boughs, as the moon rose high and higher. And now out broke the light from Darrell's lofty casement, and Losely smiled fiercely, and muttered—hark! the very words—"And *then!* come what may!"

Hoofs are now heard on the hard road, and Jasper is joined by his accomplice.

"Well, said Jasper!"

"Mount!" returned Cutts; "I have much to say as we ride."

"This will not do," resumed Cutts, as they sped fast down the lane; why, you never told me all the drawbacks. There are no less than four men in the house—two servants besides the master and his secretary; and one of those servants, the butler or valet, has firearms, and knows how to use them."

"Pshaw!" said Jasper, scoffingly; "is that all? Am I not a match for four?"

"No, it is not all; you told me the master of the house was a retired elderly man, and you mentioned his name. But you never told me that your Mr. Darrell was the famous lawyer and Parliament man—a man about whom the newspapers have been writing the last six months."

"What does that signify?"

"Signify! Just this, that there will be ten times more row about the affair you propose than there would be if it concerned only a stupid old country squire, and therefore ten times as much danger. Besides, on principle I don't like to have anything to do with lawyers—a cantankrous, spiteful set of fellows. And this Guy Darrell! Why, General Jas, I have seen the man. He cross-examined me once when I was a witness on a case of fraud, and turned me inside out with as much ease as if I had been an old pincushion stuffed with bran. I think I see his eye now, and I would as lief have a loaded pistol at my head as that eye again fixed on mine."

"Pooh! You have brought a mask; and, besides, *you* need not see him; I can face him alone."

"No, no; there might be murder! I never mix myself with things of that kind, on principle; your plan will not do. There might be a much safer chance of more *swag* in a very different sort of scheme. I hear that the pictures in that ghostly long room I crept through are worth a mint of money. Now, pictures of great value are well known, and there are collectors abroad who would pay almost any price for some pictures, and never ask where they came from; hide them for some years perhaps, and not bring them forth till any tales that would hurt us had died away. This would be safe, I say. If the pictures are small, no one in the old house need be disturbed. I can learn from some of the trade what pictures Darrell really

has that would fetch a high price, and then look out for customers abroad. This will take a little time, but be worth waiting for."

"I will not wait," said Jasper, fiercely; "and you are a coward. I have resolved that to-morrow night I will be in that man's room, and that man shall be on his knees before me."

Cutts turned sharply round on his saddle, and by aid of the moonlight surveyed Losely's countenance. "Oh, I see," he said, "there is more than robbery in your mind. You have some feeling of hate—of vengeance; the man has injured you?"

"He has treated me as if I were a dog," said Jasper; "and a dog *can* bite."

Cutts mused a few moments. "I have heard you talk at times about some rich relation or connection on whom you had claims; Darrell is the man, I suppose?"

"He is; and hark ye, Cutts, if you try to balk me here, I will wring your neck off. And since I have told you so much, I will tell you this much more—that I don't think there is the danger you count on; for I don't mean to take Darrell's blood, and I believe he would not take mine."

"But there may be a struggle—and then?"

"Ay, if so, and then—man to man," replied Jasper, mutteringly.

Nothing more was said, but both spurred on their horses to a quicker pace. The sparks flashed from the hoofs. Now through the moonlight, now under shade of the boughs, scoured on the riders—Losely's broad chest and marked countenance once beautiful, now fearful, formidably defined even under the shadows—his comrade's unsubstantial figure and goblin features flitting vague even under the moonlight.

The town they had left came in sight, and by this time Cutts had resolved on the course his prudence suggested to him. The discovery that, in the proposed enterprise, Losely had a personal feeling of revenge to satisfy had sufficed to decide the accomplice peremptorily to have nothing to do with the affair. It was his rule to abstain from all transactions in which fierce passions were engaged. And the quarrels between relations or connections were especially those which his experience of human nature told him brought risk upon all intermeddlers. But he saw

that Jasper was desperate; that the rage of the bravo might be easily turned on himself; and therefore, since it was no use to argue, it would be discreet to dissimulate. Accordingly, when they reached their inn, and were seated over their brandy-and-water, Cutts resumed the conversation, appeared gradually to yield to Jasper's reasonings, concerted with him the whole plan for the next night's operations, and took care meanwhile to pass the brandy. The day had scarcely broken before Cutts was off, with his bag of implements and tracts. He would have fain carried off also both the horses; but the ostler, surly at being knocked up at so early an hour, might not have surrendered the one ridden by Jasper, without Jasper's own order to do so. Cutts, however, bade the ostler be sure and tell the gentleman, before going away, that he, Cutts, strongly advised him "to have nothing to do with the bullocks."

Cutts, on arriving in London, went straight to Mrs. Crane's old lodging opposite to Jasper's. But she had now removed to Podden Place, and left no address. On reaching his own home, Cutts, however, found a note from her, stating that she should be at her old lodging that evening, if he would call at half-past nine o'clock; for, indeed, she had been expecting Jasper's promised visit—had learned that he had left his lodgings, and was naturally anxious to learn from Cutts what had become of him. When Cutts called at the appointed hour, and told his story, Arabella Crane immediately recognised all the danger which her informant had so prudently shunned. Nor was she comforted by Cutts's assurance that Jasper, on finding himself deserted, would have no option but to abandon, or at least postpone, an enterprise that, undertaken singly, would be too rash even for his reckless temerity. As it had become the object of her life to save Losely from justice, so she now shrunk from denouncing to justice his meditated crime; and the idea of recurring to Colonel Morley happily flashed upon her.

Having thus explained to the reader these antecedents in the narrative, we return to Jasper. He did not rise till late at noon; and as he was generally somewhat stupefied on rising, by the drink he had taken the night before, and by the congested brain which the heaviness of such sleep produced, he could not at first believe that Cutts had altogether abandoned the enterprise—rather thought that, with

his habitual wariness, that Ulysses of the Profession had gone forth to collect farther information in the neighbourhood of the proposed scene of action. He was not fully undeceived in this belief till somewhat late in the day, when strolling into the stable-yard, the ostler, concluding from the gentleman's goodly thews and size that he was a north-country grazier, delivered Cutts's allegorical caution against the bullocks.

Thus abandoned, Jasper's desperate project only acquired a still more concentrated purpose, and a ruder simplicity of action. His original idea, on first conceiving the plan of robbery, had been to enter into Darrell's presence disguised and masked. Even, however, before Cutts deserted him, the mere hope of plunder had become subordinate to the desire of a personal triumph; and now that Cutts had left him to himself, and carried away the means of disguise, Jasper felt rather pleased than otherwise at the thought that his design should have none of the characteristics of a vulgar burglary. No mask now; his front should be as open as his demand. Cutts's report of the facility of penetrating into Darrell's very room also lessened the uses of an accomplice. And in the remodification of his first hasty plan of commonplace midnight stealthy robbery, he would no longer even require an assistant to dispose of the plunder he might gain. Darrell should now yield to his exactions, as a garrison surprised accepts the terms of its conqueror. There would be no flight, no hiding, no fear of notes stopped at banks. He would march out, hand on haunch, with those immunities of booty that belong to the honours of war. Pleasing his self-conceit with so gallant a view of his meditated exploit, Jasper sauntered at dark into the town, bought a few long narrow nails and a small hammer, and returning to his room, by the aid of the fire, the tongs, and the hammer, he fashioned these nails, with an ease and quickness which showed an expert practitioner, into instruments that would readily move the wards of any common country-made lock. He did not care for weapons. He trusted at need to his own powerful hands. It was no longer, too, the affair of a robber unknown, unguessed, who might have to fight his way out of an alarmed household. It was but the visit which he, Jasper Losely, Esquire, thought fit to pay, however unceremoniously and unseasonably, to the house of a father-in-law! At the worst, should

he fail in finding Darrell, or securing an unwitnessed interview—should he, instead, alarm the household, it would be a proof of the integrity of his intentions that he had no weapons save those which Nature bestows on the wild man as the mightiest of her wild beasts. At night he mounted his horse, but went out of his way, keeping the high-road for an hour or two, in order to allow ample time for the farmers to have quitted the rent-feast, and the old Manor-house to be hushed in sleep. At last, when he judged the coast clear and the hour ripe, he wound back into the lane towards Fawley; and when the spire of its hamlet-church came in sight through the frosty starlit air, he dismounted—led the horse into one of the thick beech-woods that make the prevailing characteristic of the wild country round that sequestered dwelling-place—fastened the animal to a tree, and stalked towards the park-pales on foot. Lightly, as a wolf enters a sheepfold, he swung himself over the moss-grown fence; he gained the buttresses of the great raw pile; high and clear above, from Darrell's chamber, streamed the light; all the rest of the old house was closed and dark, buried no doubt in slumber.

He is now in the hollows of the skeleton pile; he mounts the ladder; the lock of the door before him yields to his rude implements but artful hand. He is in the long gallery; the moonlight comes broad and clear through the large casements. What wealth of art is on the walls! but how profitless to the robber's greed. There, through the very halls which the master had built in the day of his ambition, saying to himself "These are for far posterity," the step of Violence, it may be of Murder, takes its stealthy way to the room of the childless man! Through the uncompleted pile, towards the uncompleted life, strides the terrible step.

The last door yields noiselessly. The small wooden corridor, narrow as the drawbridge which in ancient fortresses was swung between the commandant's room in the topmost story and some opposing wall, is before him. And Darrell's own door is half open; lights on the table—logs burning bright on the hearth. Cautiously Losely looked through the aperture. Darrell was not there; the place was solitary; but the opposite door was open also. Losely's fine ear caught the sound of a slight movement of a footstep in the room just below, to which that opposite

door admitted. In an instant the robber glided within the chamber—closed and locked the door by which he had entered, retaining the key about his person. The next stride brought him to the hearth. Beside it hung the bell-rope common in old-fashioned houses. Losely looked round; on the table by the writing implements, lay a pen-knife. In another moment the rope was cut, high out of Darrell's reach, and flung aside. The hearth, being adapted but for log-wood fires, furnished not those implements in which, at a moment of need, the owner may find an available weapon—only a slight pair of brass wood-pincers, and a shovel equally frail. Such as they were, however, Jasper quietly removed and hid them behind a heavy old bureau. Steps were now heard mounting the stair that led into the chamber; Losely shrunk back into the recess beside the mantelpiece. Darrell entered, with a book in his hand, for which he had indeed quitted his chamber—a volume containing the last Act of Parliament relating to Public Trusts, which had been sent to him by his solicitor; for he is creating a deed of Trust, to insure to the nation the Darrell antiquities, in the name of his father the antiquarian.

Darrell advanced to the writing-table, which stood in the centre of the room; laid down the book, and sighed—the short, quick, impatient sigh which had become one of his peculiar habits. The robber stole from the recess, and, gliding round to the door by which Darrell had entered, while the back of the master was still towards him, set fast the lock, and appropriated the key as he had done at the door which had admitted himself. Though the noise in that operation was but slight, it roused Darrell from his abstracted thoughts. He turned quickly, and at the same moment Losely advanced towards him.

At once Darrell comprehended his danger. His rapid glance took in all the precautions by which the intruder proclaimed his lawless purpose—the closed door, the bell-rope cut off. There, between those four secret walls, must pass the interview between himself and the desperado. He was unarmed, but he was not daunted. It was but man to man. Losely had for him his vast physical strength, his penury, despair, and vindictive purpose. Darrell had in his favour the intellect which gives presence of mind; the energy of nerve, which is no more to be seen in the

sinew and bone than the fluid which fells can be seen in the jars and the wires; and that superb kind of pride, which, if terror be felt, makes its action impossible, because a disgrace, and bravery a matter of course, simply because it is honour.

As the bravo approached, by a calm and slight movement Darrell drew to the other side of the table, placing that obstacle between himself and Losely, and, extending his arm, said, "Hold, sir; I forbid you to advance another step. You are here, no matter how, to re-urge your claims on me. Be seated; I will listen to you."

Darrell's composure took Losely so by surprise, that mechanically he obeyed the command thus tranquilly laid upon him, and sunk into a chair—facing Darrell with a sinister under-look from his sullen brow. "Ah!" he said, "you will listen to me now; but my terms have risen."

Darrell, who had also seated himself, made no answer; but his face was resolute, and his eye watchful. The ruffian resumed, in a gruffer tone, "My terms have risen, Mr. Darrell."

"Have they, sir? and why?"

"Why! Because no one can come to your aid here; because here you cannot escape; because here you are in my power!"

"Rather, sir, I listen to you because here you are under my roof-tree; and it is you who are in my power!"

"Yours! Look round; the doors are locked on you. Perhaps you think your shouts, your cries might bring aid to you. Attempt it—raise your voice—and I strangle you with these hands."

"If I do not raise my voice, it is, first, because I should be ashamed of myself if I required aid against one man; and, secondly, because I would not expose to my dependants a would-be assassin in him whom my lost child called husband. Hush, sir, hush, or your own voice will alarm those who sleep below. And now what is it you ask? Be plain, sir, and be brief."

"Well, if you like to take matters coolly, I have no objection. These are my terms. You have received large sums this day; those sums are in your house, probably in that bureau; and your life is at my will."

"You ask the monies paid for rent to-day. True, they are in the house; but they are not in my apartments.

They were received by another; they are kept by another. In vain, through the windings and passages of this old house, would you seek to find the room in which he stores them. In doing so you will pass by the door of a servant who sleeps so lightly, that the chances are that he will hear you; he is armed with a blunderbuss, and with pistols. You say to me, 'Your money or your life.' I say to you, in reply, 'Neither: attempt to seize the money, and your own life is lost.'"

"Miser! I don't believe that sums so large are not in your own keeping. And even if they are not, you shall show me where they are; you shall lead me through those windings and passages of which you so tenderly warn me, my hand on your throat. And if servants wake, or danger threaten me, it is you who shall save me, or die! Ha! you do not fear me—eh, Mr. Darrell!" And Losely rose.

"I do not fear you," replied Darrell, still seated. "I cannot conceive that you are here with no other design than a profitless murder. You are here, you say, to make terms; it will be time enough to see whose life is endangered when all your propositions have been stated. As yet you have only suggested a robbery, to which you have asked me to assist you. Impossible! Grant even that you were able to murder me, you would be just as far off from your booty. And yet you say your terms have risen! To me they seem fallen to—nothing! Have you anything else to say?"

The calmness of Darrell, so supremely displayed in this irony, began to tell upon the ruffian—the magnetism of the great man's eye and voice, and stedfast courage, gradually gaining power over the wild, inferior animal. Trying to recover his constitutional audacity, Jasper said, with a tone of the old rollicking voice, "Well, Mr. Darrell, it is all one to me how I wring from you, in your own house, what you refused me when I was a suppliant on the road. Fair means are pleasanter than foul. I am a gentleman—the grandson of Sir Julian Losely, of Losely Hall; I am your son-in-law; and I am starving. This must not be; write me a cheque."

Darrell dipped his pen in the ink, and drew the paper towards him.

"Oho! you don't fear me, eh? This is not done from fear, mind—all out of pure love and compassion, my kind

father-in-law. You will write me a cheque for five thousand pounds—come, I am moderate—your life is worth a precious deal more than that. Hand me the cheque—I will trust to your honour to give me no trouble in cashing it, and bid you good-night—my father-in-law."

As Losely ceased with a mocking laugh, Darrell sprang up quickly, threw open the small casement which was within his reach, and flung from it the paper on which he had been writing, and which he wrapt round the heavy armorial seal that lay on the table.

Losely bounded towards him. "What means that?—What have you done?"

"Saved your life and mine, Jasper Losely," said Darrell, solemnly, and catching the arm that was raised against him. "We are now upon equal terms."

"I understand," growled the tiger, as the slaver gathered to his lips—"you think by that paper to summon some one to your aid."

"Not so—that paper is useless while I live. Look forth—the moonlight is on the roofs below—can you see where that paper has fallen? On the ledge of a parapet that your foot could not reach. It faces the window of a room in which one of my household sleeps; it will meet his eye in the morning when the shutters are unbarred; and on that paper are writ these words, 'If I am this night murdered, the murderer is Jasper Losely,' and the paper is signed by my name. Back, sir—would you doom yourself to the gibbet?"

Darrell released the dread arm he had arrested, and Losely stared at him, amazed, bewildered.

Darrell resumed: "And now I tell you plainly that I can accede to no terms put to me thus. I can sign my hand to no order that you may dictate, because that would be to sign myself a coward—and my name is Darrell!"

"Down on your knees, proud man—sign you shall, and on your knees! I care not now for gold—I care not now a rush for my life. I came here to humble the man who from first to last has so scornfully humbled me—And I will, I will! On your knees—on your knees!"

The robber flung himself forward; but Darrell, whose eye had never quitted the foe, was prepared for and eluded the rush. Losely, missing his object, lost his balance, struck against the edge of the table which partially inter-

posed between himself and his prey, and was only saved from falling by the close neighbourhood of the wall, on which he came with a shock that for the moment well-nigh stunned him. Meanwhile Darrell had gained the hearth, and snatched from it a large log half-burning. Jasper, recovering himself, dashed the long matted hair from his eyes, and, seeing undismayed the formidable weapon with which he was menaced, cowered for a second and deadlier spring.

"Stay, stay, stay, parricide and madman!" cried Darrell, his eyes flashing brighter than the brand. "It is not my life I plead for—it is yours. Remember, if I fall by your hand, no hope and no refuge are left to you! In the name of my dead child, and under the eye of avenging Heaven, I strike down the fury that blinds you, and I scare back your soul from the abyss!"

So ineffably grand were the man's look and gesture—so full of sonorous terror the swell of his matchless all-conquering voice—that Losely, in his midmost rage, stood awed and spell-bound. His breast heaved, his eye fell, his frame collapsed, even his very tongue seemed to cleave to the parched roof of his mouth. Whether the effect so suddenly produced might have continued, whether the startled miscreant might not have lashed himself into renewed wrath and inexpiable crime, passes out of conjecture. At that instant simultaneously were heard hurried footsteps in the corridor without, violent blows on the door, and voices exclaiming, "Open, open!—Darrell, Darrell!"—while the bell at the portals of the old house rang fast and shrill.

"Ho!—is it so?" growled Losely, recovering himself at those unwelcome sounds. "But do not think that I will be caught thus, like a rat in a trap. No—I will—"

"Hist!" interrupted Darrell, dropping the brand, and advancing quickly on the ruffian—"Hist!—let no one know that my daughter's husband came here with a felon's purpose. Sit down—down I say; it is for my house's honour that you should be safe." And suddenly placing both hands on Losely's broad shoulder, he forced him into a seat.

During these few hurried words, the strokes at the door and the shouts without had been continued, and the door shook on its yielding hinges.

"The key—the key!" whispered Darrell.

But the bravo was stupefied by the suddenness with which his rage had been cowed, his design baffled, his position changed from the man dictating laws and threatening life, to the man protected by his intended victim. And he was so slow in even comprehending the meaning of Darrell's order, that Darrell had scarcely snatched the keys less from his hand than from the pouch to which he at last mechanically pointed, when the door was burst open, and Lionel Haughton, Alban Morley, and the Colonel's servant, were in the room. Not one of them, at the first glance, perceived the inmates of the chamber who were at the right of their entrance, by the angle of the wall and in shadow. But out came Darrell's calm voice—

"Alban! Lionel!—welcome always; but what brings you hither at such an hour, with such clamour? Armed too!"

The three men stood petrified. There sate, peaceably enough, a large dark form, its hands on its knees, its head bent down, so that the features were not distinguishable; and over the chair in which this bending figure was thus confusedly gathered up, leant Guy Darrell, with quiet ease—no trace of fear nor of past danger in his face, which, though very pale, was serene, with a slight smile on the firm lips.

"Well," muttered Alban Morley, slowly lowering his pistol—"well, I am surprised!—yes, for the first time in twenty years, I *am* surprised!"

"Surprised perhaps to find me at this hour still up, and with a person upon business—the door locked. However, mutual explanations later. Of course you stay here to-night. My business with this—this visitor, is now over. Lionel, open that door—here is the key.—Sir"—(he touched Losely by the shoulder, and whispered in his ear, "Rise and speak not,")—(aloud)—"Sir, I need not detain you longer. Allow me to show you the way out of this rambling old house."

Jasper rose like one half asleep, and, still bending his form and hiding his face, followed Darrell down the private stair, through the study, the library, into the hall, the Colonel's servant lighting the way; and Lionel and Morley, still too amazed for words, bringing up the rear. The servant drew the heavy bolts from the front door: and

now the household had caught alarm. Mills first appeared with the blunderbuss, then the footman, then Fairthorn.

"Stand back, there!" cried Darrell, and he opened the door himself to Losely. "Sir," said he then, as they stood in the moonlight, "mark that I told you truly—you were in my power; and if the events of this night can lead you to acknowledge a watchful Providence, and recall with a shudder the crime from which you have been saved, why, then, I too, out of gratitude to Heaven, may think of means by which to free others from the peril of your despair."

Losely made no answer, but slunk off with a fast, furtive stride, hastening out of the moonlit sward into the gloom of the leafless trees.

CHAPTER II.

If the Lion ever wear the Fox's hide, still he wears it as a Lion.

WHEN Darrell was alone with Lionel and Alban Morley, the calm with which he had before startled them vanished. He poured out his thanks with deep emotion. "Forgive me; not in the presence of a servant could I say, 'You have saved me from an unnatural strife, and my daughter's husband from a murderer's end.' But by what wondrous mercy did you learn my danger? Were you sent to my aid?"

Alban briefly explained. "You may judge," he said in conclusion, "how great was our anxiety, when, following the instructions of our guide, while our driver rang his alarum at the front portals, we made our entrance into yon ribs of stone, found the doors already opened, and feared we might be too late. But, meanwhile, the poor woman waits without in the carriage that brought us from the station. I must go and relieve her mind."

"And bring her hither," cried Darrell, "to receive my gratitude. Stay, Alban; while you leave me with her, you will speak aside to Mills; tell him that you heard there was an attempt to be made on the house, and came to frustrate it, but that your fears were exaggerated; the man was more a half-insane mendicant than a robber. Be sure, at least, that his identity with Losely be not surmised, and

bid Mills treat the affair lightly. Public men are exposed, you know, to assaults from crackbrained enthusiasts; or stay—I once was a lawyer, and" (continued Darrell, whose irony had become so integral an attribute of his mind as to be proof against all trial) "there *are* men so out of their wits as to fancy a lawyer has ruined them! Lionel, tell poor Dick Fairthorn to come to me." When the musician entered, Darrell whispered to him, "Go back to your room —open your casement—step out on to the parapet—you will see something white; it is a scrap of paper wrapped round my old armorial seal. Bring it to me just as it is, Dick. That poor young Lionel, we must keep him here a day or two; mind, no prickles for him, Dick."

CHAPTER III.

Arabella Crane *versus* Guy Darrell; or, Woman *versus* Lawyer. In the Courts, Lawyer would win; but in a Private Parlour, foot to foot, and tongue to tongue, Lawyer has not a chance.

ARABELLA CRANE entered the room: Darrell hesitated—the remembrances attached to her were so painful and repugnant. But did he not now owe to her, perhaps, his very life? He passed his hand rapidly over his brow, as if to sweep away all earlier recollections, and, advancing quickly, extended that hand to her. The stern woman shook her head, and rejected the proffered greeting.

"You owe me no thanks," she said, in her harsh, ungracious accents; "I sought to save not you, but him."

"How!" said Darrell, startled; "you feel no resentment against the man who injured and betrayed you?"

"What my feelings may be towards him are not for you to conjecture; man could not conjecture them; I am woman. What they once were I might blush for; what they are now, I could own without shame. But you, Mr. Darrell,—you, in the hour of my uttermost anguish, when all my future was laid desolate, and the world lay crushed at my feet—you—man, chivalrous man!—you had for me no human compassion—you thrust me in scorn from your doors—you saw in my woe nothing but my error—you sent me forth, stripped of reputation, branded by your contempt, to famine or to suicide. And you wonder that I feel less resentment against him who wronged me than

against you, who, knowing me wronged, only disdained my grief. The answer is plain—the scorn of the man she only reverenced leaves to a woman no memory to mitigate its bitterness and gall. The wrongs inflicted by the man she loved may leave, what they have left to me, an undying sense of a past existence—radiant, joyous, hopeful; of a time when the earth seemed covered with blossoms, just ready to burst into bloom; when the skies through their haze took the rose-hues as the sun seemed about to rise. The memory that I once was happy, at least then, I owe to him who injured and betrayed me. To you, when happiness was lost to me for ever, what do I owe? Tell me."

Struck by her words, more by her impressive manner, though not recognising the plea by which the defendant thus raised herself into the accuser, Darrell answered gently, "Pardon me; this is no moment to revive recollections of anger on my part; but reflect, I entreat you, and you will feel that I was not too harsh. In the same position any other man would not have been less severe."

"Any other man!" she exclaimed; "ay, possibly! but would the scorn of any other man so have crushed self-esteem? The injuries of the wicked do not sour us against the good; but the scoff of the good leaves us malignant against virtue itself. Any other man! Tut! Genius is bound to be indulgent. It should know human errors so well—has, with its large luminous forces, such errors itself when it deigns to be human, that, where others may scorn, genius should only pity." She paused a moment, and then slowly resumed. "And pity was my due. Had you, or had any one lofty as yourself in reputed honour, but said to me, 'Thou hast sinned—thou must suffer; but sin itself needs compassion, and compassion forbids thee to despair,' —why, then, I might have been gentler to the things of earth, and less steeled against the influences of Heaven than I have been. That is all—no matter now. Mr. Darrell, I would not part from you with angry and bitter sentiments. Colonel Morley tells me that you have not only let the man, whom we need not name, go free, but that you have guarded the secret of his designs. For this I thank you. I thank you, because, what is left of that blasted and deformed existence, I have taken into mine. And I would save that man from his own devices as I would save my soul from its own temptations. Are you

large-hearted enough to comprehend me? Look in my face—you have seen his; all earthly love is erased and blotted out of both."

Guy Darrell bowed his head in respect that partook of awe.

"You, too," said the grim woman, after a pause, and approaching him nearer—"*you*, too, have loved, I am told, and you, too, were forsaken."

He recoiled and shuddered.

"What is left to your heart of its ancient folly? I should like to know! I am curious to learn if there be a man who can feel as woman! Have you only resentment? have you only disdain? have you only vengeance? have you pity? or have you the jealous absorbing desire, surviving the affection from which it sprang, that still the life wrenched from you shall owe, despite itself, a melancholy allegiance to your own?"

Darrell impatiently waved his hand to forbid farther questions; and it needed all his sense of the service this woman had just rendered him, to repress his haughty displeasure at so close an approach to his torturing secrets.

Arabella's dark bright eyes rested on his knitted brow, for a moment, wistfully, musingly. Then she said,—"I see! man's inflexible pride—no pardon there! But own, at least, that you have suffered."

"Suffered!" groaned Darrell, involuntarily, and pressing his hand to his heart.

"You have! and you own it! Fellow-sufferer, I have no more anger against you. Neither should pity, but let each respect the other. A few words more,—this child!"

"Ay—ay—this child! *you* will be truthful. You will not seek to deceive me—you know that she—she—claimed by that assassin, reared by his convict father—*she* is no daughter of my line!"

"What! would it then be no joy to know that your line did not close with yourself—that your child might——"

"Cease, madam, cease—it matters not to a man nor to a race when it perish, so that it perish at last with honour. Who would have either himself or his lineage live on into a day when the escutcheon is blotted and the name disgraced? No; if that be Matilda's child, tell me, and I will bear, as man may do, the last calamity which the will

of Heaven may inflict. If, as I have all reason to think, the tale be an imposture, speak and give me the sole comfort to which I would cling amidst the ruin of all other hopes."

"Verily," said Arabella, with a kind of musing wonder in the tone of her softened voice; "verily, has a man's heart the same throb and fibre as a woman's? Had I a child like that blue-eyed wanderer with the frail form needing protection, and the brave spirit that ennobles softness, what would be my pride! my bliss! Talk of shame—disgrace! Fie—fie—the more the evil of others darkened one so innocent, the more cause to love and shelter her. But *I*—am childless! Shall I tell you that the offence which lies heaviest on my conscience has been my cruelty to that girl? She was given an infant to my care. I saw in her the daughter of that false, false, mean, deceiving friend, who had taken my confidence, and bought, with her supposed heritage, the man sworn by all oaths to me. I saw in her, too, your descendant, your rightful heiress. I rejoiced in a revenge on your daughter and yourself. Think not *I* would have foisted her on your notice! No. I would have kept her without culture, without consciousness of a higher lot; and when I gave her up to her grandsire the convict, it was a triumph to think that Matilda's child would be an outcast. Terrible thought! but I was mad then. But that poor convict whom you, in your worldly arrogance, so loftily despise—*he* took to his breast what was flung away as a worthless weed. And if the flower keep the promise of the bud, never flower so fair bloomed from your vaunted stem! And yet you would bless me, if I said, 'Pass on, childless man; she is nothing to you!'"

"Madam, let us not argue. As you yourself justly imply, man's heart and woman's must each know throbs that never are, and never should be, familiar to the other. I repeat my question, and again I implore your answer."

"I cannot answer for certain; and I am fearful of answering at all, lest on a point so important I should mislead you. Matilda's child? Jasper affirmed it to me. His father believed him—I believed him. I never had the shadow of a doubt till——"

"Till what? For Heaven's sake speak."

"Till about five years ago, or somewhat more, I saw a letter from Gabrielle Desmarets, and——"

"Ah! which made you suspect, as I do, that the child is Gabrielle Desmarets' daughter."

Arabella reared her crest as a serpent before it strikes. "Gabrielle's daughter! You think so. Her child that I sheltered! Her child for whom I have just pleaded to you! *Hers!*" She suddenly became silent. Evidently that idea had never before struck her; evidently it now shocked her; evidently something was passing through her mind which did not allow that idea to be dismissed. As Darrell was about to address her, she exclaimed abruptly, "No! say no more now. You may hear from me again should I learn what may decide at least this doubt one way or the other. Farewell, sir."

"Not yet. Permit me to remind you that you have saved the life of a man whose wealth is immense."

"Mr. Darrell, my wealth in relation to my wants is perhaps immense as yours, for I do not spend what I possess."

"But this unhappy outlaw, whom you would save from himself, can henceforth be to you but a burthen and a charge. After what has passed to-night, I do tremble to think that penury may whisper other houses to rob, other lives to menace. Let me, then, place at your disposal, to be employed in such mode as you deem the best, a sum that may suffice to secure an object which we have in common."

"No, Mr. Darrell," said Arabella, fiercely; "whatever he be, never with my consent shall Jasper Losely be beholden to you for alms. If money can save him from shame and a dreadful death, that money shall be mine. I have said it. And, hark you, Mr. Darrell, what is repentance without atonement? I say not that I repent; but I do know that I seek to atone."

The iron-grey robe fluttered an instant, and then vanished from the room.

When Alban Morley returned to the library, he saw Darrell at the farther corner of the room, on his knees. Well might Guy Darrell thank Heaven for the mercies vouchsafed to him that night. Life preserved? Is *that* all? Might life yet be bettered and gladdened? Was there aught in the grim woman's words that might bequeath

thoughts which reflection would ripen into influences over action?—aught that might suggest the cases in which, not ignobly, Pity might subjugate Scorn? In the royal abode of that Soul, does Pride *only* fortify Honour?—is it but the mild king, not the imperial despot? Would it blind, as its rival, the Reason? Would it chain, as a rebel, the Heart? Would it man the dominions, that might be serene, by the treasures it wastes—by the wars it provokes? Self-knowledge! self-knowledge! From Heaven, indeed, descends the precept—"KNOW THYSELF." That truth was told to us by the old heathen oracle. But what old heathen oracle has told us *how* to know?"

CHAPTER IV.

The Man-eater humiliated. He encounters an old acquaintance in a traveller, who, like Shakespeare's Jaques, is "a melancholy fellow," who also, like Jaques, hath "great reason to be sad;" and who, still like Jaques, is "full of matter."

JASPER LOSELY rode slowly on through the clear frosty night; not back to the country town which he had left on his hateful errand, nor into the broad road to London. With a strange desire to avoid the haunts of men, he selected—at each choice of way in the many paths branching right and left, between waste and woodland—the lane that seemed the narrowest and the dimmest. It was not remorse that gnawed him, neither was it mere mercenary disappointment, nor even the pang of baffled vengeance—it was the profound humiliation of diseased self-love—the conviction that, with all his brute power, he had been powerless in the very time and scene in which he had pictured to himself so complete a triumph. Even the quiet with which he had escaped was a mortifying recollection. Capture itself would have been preferable, if capture had been preceded by brawl and strife—the exhibition of his hardihood and prowess. Gloomily bending over his horse's neck, he cursed himself as fool and coward. What would he have had!—a new crime on his soul? Perhaps he would have answered—"Anything rather than this humiliating failure." He did not rack his brains with conjecturing if Cutts had betrayed him, or by what other mode assistance had been sent in such time of need to Darrell.

Nor did he feel that hunger for vengeance, whether on Darrell or on his accomplice (should that accomplice have played the traitor), which might have been expected from his characteristic ferocity. On the contrary, the thought of violence and its excitements had in it a sickness as of shame. Darrell at that hour might have ridden by him scathless. Cutts might have jeered and said,—"I blabbed your secret, and sent the aid that foiled it;" and Losely would have continued to hang his head, nor lifted the herculean hand that lay nerveless on the horse's mane. Is it not commonly so in all reaction from excitements in which self-love has been keenly galled? Does not vanity enter into the lust of crime as into the desire of fame?

At sunrise Losely found himself on the high-road into which a labyrinth of lanes had led him, and opposite to a milestone, by which he learned that he had been long turning his back on the metropolis, and that he was about ten miles distant from the provincial city of Ouzelford. By this time his horse was knocked up, and his own chronic pains began to make themselves acutely felt; so that, when, a little farther on, he came to a wayside inn, he was glad to halt; and after a strong dram, which had the effect of an opiate, he betook himself to bed, and slept till the noon was far advanced.

When Losely came down stairs, the common room of the inn was occupied by a meeting of the trustees of the high-roads; and, on demanding breakfast, he was shown into a small sanded parlour adjoining the kitchen. Two other occupants—a man and a woman—were there already, seated at a table by the fire-side, over a pint of half-and-half. Losely, warming himself at the hearth, scarcely noticed these humble revellers by a glance. And they, after a displeased stare at the stalwart frame which obscured the cheering glow they had hitherto monopolised, resumed a muttered conversation; of which, as well as of the *vile modicum* that refreshed their lips, the man took the lion's share. Shabbily forlorn were that man's habiliments—turned and returned, patched, darned, weather-stained, grease-stained—but still retaining that kind of mouldy, grandiose, bastard gentility, which implies that the wearer has known better days; and, in the downward progress of fortunes when they once fall, may probably know still worse. The woman was some years older than her com-

panion, and still more forlornly shabby. Her garments seemed literally composed of particles of dust glued together, while her face might have insured her condemnation as a witch before any honest jury in the reign of King James the First. His breakfast, and the brandy-bottle that flanked the loaf, were now placed before Losely; and, as distastefully he forced himself to eat, his eye once more glanced towards, and this time rested on, the shabby man, in the sort of interest with which one knave out of elbows regards another. As Jasper thus looked, gradually there stole on him a reminiscence of those coarse large features—that rusty disreputable wig. The recognition, however, was not mutual; and presently, after a whisper interchanged between the man and the woman, the latter rose, and approaching Losely, dropped a curtsy, and said, in a weird, under voice—"Stranger! luck's in store for you. Tell your fortune!" As she spoke, from some dust-hole in her garments she produced a pack of cards, on whose half-obliterated faces seemed incrusted the dirt of ages. Thrusting these antiquities under Jasper's nose, she added, "Wish and cut."

"Pshaw," said Jasper, who, though sufficiently superstitious in some matters and in regard to some persons, was not so completely under the influence of that imaginative infirmity as to take the creature before him for a sibyl. "Get away; you turn my stomach. Your cards smell; so do you!"

"Forgive her, worthy sir," said the man, leaning forward. "The hag may be unsavoury, but she is wise. The Three Sisters who accosted the Scottish Thane, sir (Macbeth—you have seen it on the stage?) were not savoury. Withered, and wild in their attire, sir, but they knew a thing or two! She sees luck in your face. Cross her hand and give it vent!"

"Fiddledee," said the irreverent Losely. "Take her off, or I shall scald her," and he seized the kettle.

The hag retreated grumbling; and Losely, soon despatching his meal, placed his feet on the hobs, and began to meditate what course to adopt for a temporary subsistence. He had broken into the last pound left of the money which he had extracted from Mrs. Crane's purse some days before. He recoiled with terror from the thought of returning to town and placing himself at her

mercy. Yet what option had he? While thus musing, he turned impatiently round, and saw that the shabby man and the dusty hag were engaged in an amicable game of *ecarté*, with those very cards which had so offended his olfactory organs. At that sight the old instinct of the gambler struggled back; and, raising himself up, he looked over the cards of the players. The miserable wretches were, of course, playing for nothing; and Losely saw at a glance that the man was, nevertheless, trying to cheat the woman! Positively he took that man into more respect; and that man, noticing the interest with which Losely surveyed the game, looked up, and said, "While the time, sir? What say you? A game or two? I can stake my pistoles—that is, sir, so far as a fourpenny bit goes. If ignorant of this French game, sir, cribbage or all fours?"

"No," said Losely, mournfully; there is nothing to be got out of you; otherwise"—he stopped and sighed. "But I have seen you under other circumstances. What has become of your Theatrical Exhibition? Gambled it away. Yet, from what I see of your play, I think you ought not to have lost, Mr. Rugge."

The ex-manager started.

"What! You knew me before the Storm?—before the lightning struck me, as I may say, sir—and falling into difficulties, I became—a wreck? You knew me?—not of the Company?—a spectator?"

"As you say—a spectator. You had once in your employ an actor—clever old fellow. Waife, I think, he was called."

"Ah! hold! At that name, sir, my wounds bleed afresh. From that execrable name, sir, there hangs a tale!"

"Indeed! Then it will be a relief to you to tell it," said Losely, resettling his feet on the hob, and snatching at any diversion from his own reflections.

"Sir, when a gentleman, who is a gentleman, asks as a favour, a specimen of my powers of recital, not professionally, and has before him the sparkling goblet, which he does not invite me to share, he insults my fallen fortunes. Sir, I am poor—I own it; I have fallen into the sere and yellow leaf, sir; but I have still in this withered bosom the heart of a Briton!"

"Warm it, Mr. Rugge. Help yourself to the brandy—and the lady too."

"Sir, you are a gentleman; sir, your health. Hag, drink better days to us both. That woman, sir, *is* a hag, but she is an honour to her sex—faithful!"

"It is astonishing how faithful ladies are when not what is called beautiful. I speak from painful experience," said Losely, growing debonnair as the liquor relaxed his gloom, and regaining that levity of tongue which sometimes strayed into wit, and which—springing originally from animal spirits and redundant health—still came to him mechanically whenever roused by companionship from alternate intervals of lethargy and pain. "But, now, Mr. Rugge, I am all ears; perhaps you will be kind enough to be all tale."

With tragic aspect, unrelaxed by that *jeu de mots*, and still wholly unrecognising in the massive form and discoloured swollen countenance of the rough-clad stranger, the elegant proportions, the healthful, blooming, showy face, and elaborate fopperies of the Jasper Losely who had sold to him a Phenomenon which proved so evanishing, Rugge entered into a prolix history of his wrongs at the hands of Waife, of Losely, of Sophy. Only of Mrs. Crane did he speak with respect; and Jasper then for the first time learned—and rather with anger for the interference than gratitude for the generosity—that she had repaid the £100, and thereby cancelled Rugge's claim upon the child. The ex-manager then proceeded to the narrative of his subsequent misfortunes—all of which he laid to the charge of Waife and the Phenomenon. "Sir," said he, "I was ambitious. From my childhood's hour I dreamed of the great York Theatre—dreamed of it literally thrice. Fatal Vision! But like other dreams, that dream would have faded—been forgotten in the work-day world—and I should not have fallen into the sere and yellow, but have had, as formerly, troops of friends, and not been reduced to the horrors of poverty and a faithful Hag. But, sir, when I first took to my bosom that fiend, William Waife, he exhibited a genius, sir, that Dowton (you have seen Dowton?—grand) was a stick as compared with. Then my ambition, sir, blazed and flared up—obstreperous, and my childhood's dream haunted me; and I went about musing [Hag, you recollect!]—and muttering 'The Royal Theatre at York.' But, incredible though it seem, the ungrateful scorpion left me with a treacherous design to exhibit the parts I had fostered

on the London boards; and even-handed Justice, sir, returned the poisoned chalice to his lips, causing him to lose an eye and to hobble—besides splitting up his voice—which served him right. And again I took the scorpion for the sake of the Phenomenon. I had a babe myself once, sir, though you may not think it. Gormerick (that is this faithful Hag) gave the babe Daffy's Elixir, in teething; but it died—convulsions. I comforted myself when that Phenomenon came out on my stage—in pink satin and pearls. 'Ha,' I said, 'the great York Theatre shall yet be be mine!' The haunting idea became a Mania, sir. The learned say that there is a Mania called Money Mania *—when one can think but of the one thing needful—as the guilty Thane saw the dagger, sir—you understand. And when the Phenomenon had vanished and gone, as I was told, to America, where I now wish I was myself, acting Rolla at New York or elsewhere, to a free and enlightened people—then, sir, the Mania grew on me still stronger and stronger. There was a pride in it, sir, a British pride. I said to this faithful Hag—'What—shall I not have the York because that false child has deserted me? Am I not able to realise a Briton's ambition without being beholden to a Phenomenon in spangles?' Sir, I took the York! Alone I did it!"

"And," said Losely, feeling a sort of dreary satisfaction in listening to the grotesque sorrows of one whose condition seemed to him yet more abject than his own—"And the York Theatre alone perhaps did you."

"Right, sir," said Rugge—half-dolorously, half-exultingly. "It was a Grand Concern, and might have done for the Bank of England! It swallowed up my capital with as much ease, sir, as I could swallow an oyster if there were one upon that plate! I saw how it would be, the very first week—when I came out myself, strong—Kean's own part in the *Iron Chest*—Mortimer, sir; there warn't three pounds ten in the house—packed audience, sir, and they had the face to hiss me. 'Hag,' said I to Mrs. Gormerick, 'this Theatre is a howling wilderness.' But there is a fascination in a Grand Concern, of which one is the head—one goes on and on. All the savings of a life devoted to the British Drama and the productions of native genius went in what I may call—a jiffey! But it

* *Query*—Monomania.

was no common object, sir, to your sight displayed—but what with pleasure, sir (I appeal to the Hag!) Heaven itself surveyed!—a great man struggling, sir, with the storms of fate, and greatly falling, sir, with—a sensation! York remembers it to this day! I took the benefit of the Act—it was the only benefit I did take—and nobody was the better for it. But I don't repine—I realised my dream: that is more than all can say. Since then I have had many downs, and no ups. I have been a messenger, sir—a prompter, sir, in my own Exhibition, to which my own clown, having married into the tragic line, succeeded, sir, as proprietor; buying of me when I took the York, the theatre, scenery, and properties, sir, with the right still to call himself 'Rugge's Grand Theatrical Exhibition,' for an old song, sir—Melancholy. Tyrannised over, sir—snubbed and bullied by a creature dressed in a little brief authority; and my own tights—scarlet—as worn by me in my own applauded part of 'The Remorseless Baron.' At last, with this one faithful creature, I resolved to burst the chains—to be free as air—in short, a chartered libertine, sir. We have not much, but thank the immortal gods, we *are* independent, sir—the Hag and I—chartered libertines! And we are alive still—at which, in strict confidence, I may own to you that I am astonished."

"Yes! you do live," said Jasper, much interested—for how to live at all was at that moment a matter of considerable doubt to himself; "you do live—it *is* amazing! How?"

"The Faithful tells fortunes; and sometimes we pick up windfalls—widows and elderly single ladies—but it is dangerous. Labour is sweet, sir: but not hard labour in the dungeons of a Bridewell. She has known that labour, sir; and in those intervals I missed her much. Don't cry, Hag; I repeat, I live!"

"I understand now; you live upon her! They are the best of creatures, these hags, as you call them, certainly. Well, well, no saying what a man may come to! I suppose you have never seen Waife, nor that fellow you say was so well-dressed and good-looking, and who sold you the Phenomenon, nor the Phenomenon herself—Eh?" added Losely, stretching himself, and yawning, as he saw the brandy-bottle was finished.

"I have seen Waife—the one-eyed monster! Aha!—I

have seen him !—and yesterday too ; and a great comfort it was to me too ! "

" You saw Waife yesterday—where ? "

"At Ouzelford, which I and the Faithful, left this morning."

"And what was he doing ? " said Losely, with well-simulated indifference. " Begging, breaking stones, or what ? "

" No," said Rugge, dejectedly ; " I can't say it was what, in farcical composition, I should call such nuts to me as that, sir. Still, he was in a low way—seemed a pedlar or hawker, selling out of a pannier on the Rialto—I mean the Cornmarket, sir—not even a hag by his side, only a great dog—French. A British dog would have scorned such fellowship. And he did not look merry, as he used to do when in my troop. Did he, Hag ? "

"His conscience smites him," said the Hag, solemnly.

"Did you speak to him ? "

" Why, no. I should have liked it, but we could not at that moment, seeing that we were not in our usual state of independence. This faithful creature was being led before the magistrates, and I too—charge of cheating a cook maid, to whom the Hag had only said, 'that if the cards spoke true, she would ride in her carriage.' The charge broke down ; but we were placed for the night in the Cells of the Inquisition, remanded, and this morning banished from the city, and are now on our way to—any other city ; —eh, Hag ? "

"And the old man was not with the Phenomenon ? What has become of her, then ? "

"Perhaps she may be with him at his house, if he has one ; only, she was not with him on the Rialto or Cornmarket. She was with him two years ago, I know ; and he and she were better off then than he is now, I suspect. And that is why it did me good, sir, to see him a pedlar —a common pedlar—fallen into the sere, like the man he abandoned ! "

" Humph—where were they two years ago ? "

"At a village not far from Humberston. He had a pretty house, sir, and sold baskets ; and the girl was there too, favoured by a great lady—a Marchioness, sir ! Gods ! "

"Marchioness ?—near Humberston ? The Marchioness of Montfort, I suppose ? "

"Likely enough; I don't remember. All I know is, that two years ago my old Clown was my tyrannical manager; and being in that capacity, and this world being made for Cæsar, which is a shame, sir, he said to me, with a sneer, 'Old Gentleman Waife, whom you used to bully, and his Juliet Araminta, are in clover!' And the mocking varlet went on to unfold a tale to the effect, that when he had last visited Humberston, in the race-week, a young tradesman, who was courting the Columbine, whose young idea I myself taught to shoot on the light fantastic toe, treated that Columbine, and one of her sister train (being, indeed, her aunt, who has since come out at the Surrey in *Desdemona*) to a picnic in a fine park. (That's discipline!—ha, ha!) And there, sir, Columbine and her aunt saw Waife on the other side of a stream by which they sate carousing."

"The Clown perhaps said it to spite you."

"Columbine herself confirmed his tale, and said that, on returning to the Village Inn for the Triumphal Car (or bus) which brought them, she asked if a Mr. Waife dwelt thereabouts, and was told, 'Yes, with his granddaughter.' And she went on asking, till all came out as the Clown reported. And Columbine had not even the gratitude, the justice, to expose that villain—not even to say he had been my perfidious servant! She had the face to tell me 'she thought it might harm him, and he was a kind old soul.' Sir, a Columbine whose toes I had rapped scores of times before they could be turned out, was below contempt! but when my own Clown thus triumphed over me, in parading before my vision the bloated prosperity of mine enemy, it went to my heart like a knife; and we had words on it, sir, and—I left him to his fate. But a pedlar! Gentleman Waife has come to that! The heavens are just, sir, and of our pleasant vices, sir, make instruments that—that—"

"Scourge us," prompted the Hag, severely.

Losely rang the bell; the maid-servant appeared. "My horse and bill. Well, Mr. Rugge, I must quit your agreeable society. I am not overflowing with wealth at this moment, or I would request your acceptance of—"

"The smallest trifle," interrupted the Hag, with her habitual solemnity of aspect.

Losely, who, in his small way, had all the liberality of a Catiline, "*alieni appetens, sui profusus*," drew forth the

few silver coins yet remaining to him; and though he must have calculated that, after paying his bill, there could scarcely be three shillings left, he chucked two of them towards the Hag, who, clutching them with a profound curtsy, then handed them to the fallen monarch by her side, with a loyal tear and a quick sob that might have touched the most cynical republican.

In a few minutes more, Losely was again on horseback; and as he rode towards Ouzelford, Rugge and his dusty Faithful shambled on in the opposite direction—shambled on, foot-sore and limping, along the wide, waste, wintry thoroughfare—vanishing from the eye, as their fates henceforth from this story. There they go by the white hard milestone; farther on, by the trunk of the hedgerow-tree, which lies lopped and leafless—cumbering the wayside, till the time come to cast it off to the thronged, dull stack-yard: farther yet, where the ditch widens into yon stagnant pool, with the great dung-heap by its side. There the road turns aslant; the dung-heap hides them. Gone! and not a speck on the Immemorial, Universal Thoroughfare.

CHAPTER V.

No wind so cutting as that which sets in the quarter from which the sun rises.

The town to which I lend the disguising name of Ouzelford, which, in years bygone, was represented by Guy Darrell, and which, in years to come, may preserve in its municipal hall his effigies in canvas or stone, is one of the handsomest in England. As you approach its suburbs from the London Road, it rises clear and wide upon your eye, crowning the elevated table-land upon which it is built;—a noble range of prospect on either side, rich with hedgerows not yet sacrificed to the stern demands of modern agriculture—venerable woodlands, and the green pastures round many a rural thane's frank, hospitable hall;—no one Great House banishing from leagues of landscape the abodes of knight and squire, nor menacing, with 'the legitimate influence of property,' the votes of rebellious burghers. Everywhere, like finger-posts to heaven you may perceive the church-towers of rural hamlets em-

bosomed in pleasant valleys, or climbing up gentle slopes. At the horizon, the blue fantastic outline of girdling hills mingles with the clouds. A famous old cathedral, neighboured by the romantic ivy-grown walls of a ruined castle, soars up from the centre of the town, and dominates the whole survey—calm, as with conscious power. Nearing the town, the villas of merchants and traders, released perhaps from business, skirt the road, with trim gardens and shaven lawns. Now the small river, or rather rivulet, of Onzel, from which the town takes its name, steals out from deep banks covered with brushwood or aged trees, and, widening into brief importance, glides under the arches of an ancient bridge; runs on, clear and shallow, to refresh low fertile dairy-meadows, dotted with kine; and finally quits the view, as brake and copse close round its narrowing, winding way; and that which, under the city bridge, was an imposing noiseless stream, becomes, amidst rustic solitudes, an insignificant babbling brook.

From one of the largest villas in these charming suburbs came forth a gentleman, middle-aged, and of a very mild and prepossessing countenance. A young lady without a bonnet, but a kerchief thrown over her sleek dark hair, accompanied him to the garden-gate, twining both hands affectionately round his arm, and entreating him not to stand in thorough draughts and catch cold, nor to step into puddles and wet his feet, and to be sure to be back before dark, as there were such shocking accounts in the newspapers of persons robbed and garotted even in the most populous highways; and, above all, not to listen to the beggars in the street, and allow himself to be taken in; and before finally releasing him at the gate, she buttoned his greatcoat up to his chin, thrust two pellets of cotton into his ears, and gave him a parting kiss. Then she watched him tenderly for a minute or so as he strode on with the step of a man who needed not all those fostering admonitions and coddling cares.

As soon as he was out of sight of the lady and the windows of the villa, the gentleman cautiously unbuttoned his greatcoat, and removed the cotton from his ears. "She takes much after her mother, does Anna Maria," muttered the gentleman; and I am very glad she is so well married."

He had not advanced many paces when, from a branch-

road to the right that led to the railway station, another gentleman, much younger, and whose dress unequivocally bespoke him a minister of our Church, came suddenly upon him. Each with surprise recognised the other.

"What!—Mr. George Morley!"

"Mr. Hartopp!—How are you, my dear sir?—What brings you so far from home?"

"I am on a visit to my daughter, Anna Maria. She has not been long married—to young Jessop. Old Jessop is one of the principal merchants at Ouzelford—very respectable worthy family. The young couple are happily settled in a remarkable snug villa—that is it with the portico, not a hundred yards behind us, to the right. Very handsome town, Ouzelford; you are bound to it, of course?—we can walk together. I am going to look at the papers in the City Rooms—very fine rooms they are. But you are straight from London, perhaps, and have seen the day's journals? Any report of the meeting in aid of the Ragged Schools?"

"Not that I know of. I have not come from London this morning, nor seen the papers."

"Oh!—there's a strange-looking fellow following us; but perhaps he is your servant?"

"Not so, but my travelling companion—indeed my guide. In fact, I come to Ouzelford in the faint hope of discovering there a poor old friend of mine, of whom I have long been in search."

"Perhaps the Jessops can help you; they know everybody at Ouzelford. But now I meet you thus by surprise, Mr. George, I should very much like to ask your advice on a matter which has been much on my mind the last twenty-four hours, and which concerns a person I contrived to discover at Ouzelford, though I certainly was not in search of him—a person about whom you and I had a conversation a few years ago, when you were staying with your worthy father."

"Eh?" said George, quickly; "whom do you speak of?"

"That singular vagabond who took me in, you remember—called himself Chapman—real name William Losely, a returned convict. You would have it that he was innocent, though the man himself had pleaded guilty on his trial."

"His whole character belied his lips then. Oh, Mr. Hartopp, that man commit the crime imputed to him!—a

planned, deliberate robbery — an ungrateful, infamous breach of trust! That man—*that!* he who rejects the money he does not earn, even when pressed on him by anxious imploring friends—he who has now gone voluntarily forth, aged and lonely, to wring his bread from the humblest calling rather than incur the risk of injuring the child with whose existence he had charged himself!—*he* a dark midnight thief! Believe him not, though his voice may say it. To screen, perhaps, some other man, he is telling you a noble lie. But what of him? Have you really seen him, and at Ouzelford?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Yesterday. I was in the City Reading-Room, looking out of the window. I saw a great white dog in the street below;—I knew the dog at once, sir, though he is disguised by restoration to his natural coat, and his hair is as long as a Peruvian lama's. ''Tis Sir Isaac,' said I to myself; and behind Sir Isaac I saw Chapman, so to call him, carrying a basket with pedlar's wares, and, to my surprise, Old Jessop, who is a formal man, with a great deal of reserve and dignity, pompous indeed (but don't let that go farther), talking to Chapman quite affably, and actually buying something out of the basket. Presently Chapman went away, and was soon lost to sight. Jessop comes into the reading-room. 'I saw you,' said I, 'talking to an old fellow with a French dog.' 'Such a good old fellow,' said Jessop; 'has a way about him that gets into your very heart while he is talking. I should like to make you acquainted with him.' 'Thank you for nothing,' said I; 'I should be—taken in.' 'Never fear,' says Jessop, 'he would not take in a fly—the simplest creature.' I own I chuckled at that, Mr. George. 'And does he live here,' said I, 'or is he merely a wandering pedlar?' Then Jessop told me that he had seen him for the first time two or three weeks ago, and accosted him rudely, looking on him as a mere tramp; but Chapman answered so well, and showed so many pretty things in his basket, that Jessop soon found himself buying a pair of habit-cuffs for Anna Maria, and in the course of talk it came out, I suppose by a sign, that Chapman was a freemason, and Jessop is an enthusiast in that sort of nonsense, master of a lodge or something, and that was a new attraction. In short,

Jessop took a great fancy to him, patronised him, promised him protection, and actually recommended him to a lodging in the cottage of an old widow who lives in the outskirts of the town, and had once been a nurse in the Jessop family. And what do you think Jessop had just bought of this simple creature? A pair of worsted mittens as a present for me, and what is more, I have got them on at this moment—look! neat, I think, and monstrous warm. Now, I have hitherto kept my own counsel. I have not said to Jessop, 'Beware—that is the man who took me in.' But this concealment is a little on my conscience. On the one hand, it seems very cruel, even if the man did once commit a crime, in spite of your charitable convictions to the contrary, that I should be blabbing out his disgrace, and destroying perhaps his livelihood. On the other hand, if he should still be really a rogue, a robber, perhaps dangerous, ought I—ought I—in short—you are a clergyman and a fine scholar, sir—what ought I to do?"

"My dear Mr. Hartopp, do not vex yourself with this very honourable dilemma of conscience. Let me only find my poor old friend, my benefactor I may call him, and I hope to persuade him, if not to return to the home that waits him, at least to be my guest, or put himself under my care. Do you know the name of the widow with whom he lodges?"

"Yes—Halse; and I know the town well enough to conduct you, if not to the house itself, still to its immediate neighbourhood. Pray allow me to accompany you; I should like it very much—for, though you may not think it, from the light way I have been talking of Chapman, I never was so interested in any man, never so charmed by any man; and it has often haunted me at night, thinking that I behaved too harshly to him, and that he was about on the wide world, an outcast, deprived of his little girl, whom he had trusted to me. And I should have run after him yesterday, or called on him this morning, and said, 'Let me serve you,' if it had not been for the severity with which he and his son were spoken of, and I myself rebuked for mentioning their very names, by a man whose opinion I, and indeed all the country, must hold in the highest respect—a man of the finest honour, the weightiest character—I mean Guy Darrell, the great Darrell."

George Morley sighed. "I believe Darrell knows nothing

of the elder Losely, and is prejudiced against him by the misdeeds of the younger, to whose care you (and I cannot blame you, for I also was instrumental to the same transfer which might have proved calamitously fatal) surrendered the poor motherless girl."

"She is not with her grandfather now? She lives still, I hope? She was very delicate."

"She lives—she is safe. Ha—take care!"

These last words were spoken as a horseman, riding fast along the road towards the bridge that was now close at hand, came, without warning or heed, so close upon our two pedestrians, that George Morley had but just time to pluck Hartopp aside from the horse's hoofs.

"An impudent, careless, ruffianly fellow, indeed!" said the mild Hartopp, indignantly, as he brushed from his sleeve the splash of dirt which the horseman bequeathed to it. "He must be drunk!"

The rider, gaining the bridge, was there detained at the toll-bar by some carts and waggons, and the two gentlemen passed him on the bridge, looking with some attention at his gloomy, unobservant countenance, and the powerful frame, in which, despite coarse garments and the change wrought by years of intemperate excess, was still visible the trace of that felicitous symmetry once so admirably combining herculean strength with elastic elegance. Entering the town, the rider turned into the yard of the nearest inn. George Morley and Hartopp, followed at a little distance by Morley's travelling companion, Merle, passed on towards the other extremity of the town, and, after one or two inquiries for "Widow Halse, Prospect Row," they came to a few detached cottages, very prettily situated on a gentle hill, commanding in front the roofs of the city and the gleaming windows of the great cathedral, with somewhat large gardens in the rear. Mrs. Halse's dwelling was at the extreme end of this Row. The house, however, was shut up; and a woman, who was standing at the door of the neighbouring cottage, plaiting straw, informed the visitors that Mrs. Halse was gone out "charing" for the day, and that her lodger, who had his own key, seldom returned before dark, but that at that hour he was pretty sure to be found in the Cornmarket or the streets in its vicinity, and offered to send her little boy to discover and "fetch" him. George consulted apart with Merle, and

decided on despatching the cobbler, with the boy for his guide, in quest of the pedlar, Merle being of course instructed not to let out by whom he was accompanied, lest Waife, in his obstinacy, should rather abscond than encounter the friends from whom he had fled. Merle, and a curly-headed urchin, who seemed delighted at the idea of hunting up Sir Isaac and Sir Isaac's master, set forth, and were soon out of sight. Hartopp and George opened the little garden-gate, and strolled into the garden at the back of the cottage, to seat themselves patiently on a bench beneath an old apple-tree. Here they waited and conversed some minutes, till George observed that one of the casements on that side of the cottage was left open, and, involuntarily rising, he looked in; surveying with interest the room, which, he felt sure at the first glance, must be that occupied by his self-exiled friend; a neat pleasant little room—a bullfinch in a wicker cage on a ledge within the casement — a flower-pot beside it. Doubtless the window, which faced the southern sun, had been left open by the kind old man in order to cheer the bird and to gladden the plant. Waife's well-known pipe, and a tobacco-pouch worked for him by Sophy's fairy fingers, lay on a table near the fireplace, between casement and door; and George saw with emotion the Bible which he himself had given to the wanderer, lying also on the table, with the magnifying-glass which Waife had of late been obliged to employ in reading. Waife's habitual neatness was visible in the aspect of the room. To George it was evident that the very chairs had been arranged by his hand; that his hand had courteously given that fresh coat of varnish to the wretched portrait of a man in blue coat and buff waistcoat, representing, no doubt, the lamented spouse of the hospitable widow. George beckoned to Hartopp to come also and look within; and as the worthy trader peeped over his shoulder, the clergyman said, whisperingly, "Is there not something about a man's home which attests his character?—No 'pleading guilty' here."

Hartopp was about to answer, when they heard the key turn sharply in the outer door, and had scarcely time to draw somewhat back from the casement when Waife came hurriedly into the room, followed, not by Merle, but by the tall rough-looking horseman whom they had encountered on the road. "Thank Heaven," cried Waife, sinking on a

chair, "out of sight, out of hearing now! Now you may speak; now I can listen! O wretched son of my lost angel, whom I so vainly sought to save by the sacrifice of all my claims to the respect of men, for what purpose do you seek me? I have nothing left that you can take away! Is it the child again? See—see—look round—search the house if you will—she is not here."

"Bear with me, if you can, sir," said Jasper, in tones that were almost meek; you, at least, can say nothing that I will not bear. But I am in my right when I ask you to tell me without equivocation or reserve, if Sophy, though not actually within these wallls, be near you, in this town or it's neighbourhood?—in short, still under your protection?"

"Not in this town—not near it—not under my protection; I swear."

"Do not swear, father; I have no belief in other men's oaths. I believe your simple word. Now comes my second question—remember I am still strictly in my right—where is she?—and under whose care?"

"I will not say. One reason why I have abandoned the very air she breathes, was, that you might not trace her in tracing me. But she is out of your power again to kidnap and to sell. You might molest, harass, shame her, by proclaiming yourself her father; but regain her into your keeping, cast her to infamy and vice—never, never! She is now with no powerless, miserable convict, for whom Law has no respect. She is now no helpless infant, without a choice, without a will. She is safe from all, save the wanton, unprofitable effort to disgrace her. O Jasper, Jasper, be human—she is so delicate of frame—she is so sensitive to reproach, so tremulously alive to honour—I—*I* am not fit to be near her now. I have been a tricksome shifty vagrant, and, innocent though I be, the felon's brand is on me! But you, you too, who never loved her, who cannot miss her, whose heart is not breaking at her loss as mine is now—you, *you*—to rise up from the reeking pest-house in which you have dwelt by choice, and say, 'Descend from God's day with me'—Jasper, Jasper, you will not—you cannot; it would be the malignity of a devil!"

"Father, hold!" cried Jasper, writhing and livid; "I owe to you more than I do to that thing of pink and white. I know better than you the trumpery of all those waxen

dolls of whom dupes make idols. At each turn of the street you may find them in basketsful—blue-eyed or black-eyed, just the same worthless frippery or senseless toys; but every man dandling his own doll, whether he call it sweetheart or daughter, makes the same puling boast that he has an angel of purity in his puppet of wax. Nay, hear me! to that girl I owe nothing. You know what I owe to you. You bid me not seek her, and say, 'I am your father.' Do you think it does not misbecome me more, and can it wound you less, when I come to you, and remind you that I am your son!"

"Jasper!" faltered the old man, turning his face aside, for the touch of feeling towards himself, contrasting the cynicism with which Jasper spoke of other ties not less sacred, took the father by surprise.

"And," continued Jasper, "remembering how you once loved me—with what self-sacrifice you proved that love—it is with a bitter grudge against that girl that I see her thus take that place in your affection which was mine,—and you so indignant against me if I even presume to approach her. What! I have the malignity of a devil because I would not quietly lie down in yonder kennels to starve, or sink into the grade of those whom your daintier thief disdains; spies into unguarded areas, or cowardly skulkers by blind walls; while in the paltry girl, who you say is so well provided for, I see the last and sole resource which may prevent you from being still more degraded, still more afflicted by your son."

"What is it you want? Even if Sophy were in your power, Darrell would not be more disposed to enrich or relieve you. He will never believe your tale, nor deign even to look into its proofs."

"He might at last," said Jasper, evasively. "Surely with all that wealth, no nearer heir than a remote kinsman in the son of a beggared spendthrift by a linendraper's daughter—he should need a grandchild more than you do; yet the proofs you speak of convinced yourself; *you* believe my tale."

"Believe—yes, for that belief was everything in the world to me! Ah, remember how joyously, when my term of sentence expired, I hastened to seek you at Paris, deceived by the rare letters with which you had deigned to cheer me—fondly dreaming that, in expiating your crime,

I should have my reward in your redemption—should live to see you honoured, honest, good—live to think your mother watched us from heaven with a smile on both—and that we should both join her at last—you purified by my atonement! Oh, and when I saw you so sunken, so hardened, exulting in vice as in a glory—bravo and partner in a gambler's hell—or, worse still, living on the plunder of miserable women, even the almsman of that vile Desmarets—my son, my son, my lost Lizzy's son blotted out of my world for ever!—then, then I should have died if you had not said, boasting of the lie which had wrung the gold from Darrell, 'But the child lives still.' Believed you—oh, yes, yes—for in that belief something was still left to me to cherish, to love, to live for!"

Here the old man's hurried voice died away in a passionate sob; and the direful son, all reprobate though he was, slid from his chair, and bowed himself at his father's knee, covering his face with fell hands that trembled. "Sir, sir," he said, in broken reverential accents, "do not let me see you weep. You cannot believe me, but I say solemnly that, if there be in me a single remnant of affection for any human being, it is for you. When I consented to leave you to bear the sentence which should have fallen on myself, sure I am that I was less basely selfish than absurdly vain. I fancied myself so born to good fortune!—so formed to captivate some rich girl!—and that you would return to share wealth with me; that the evening of your days would be happy; that you would be repaid by my splendour for your own disgrace! And when I did marry, and did ultimately get from the father-in-law who spurned me, the capital of his daughter's fortune, pitifully small though it was compared to my expectations, my first idea was to send half of that sum to you. But—but—I was living with those who thought nothing so silly as a good intention—nothing so bad as a good action. That mocking she-devil, Gabrielle, too! Then the witch's spell of that d—d green-table! Luck against one—wait! double the capital ere you send the half. Luck with one—how balk the tide? how fritter the capital just at the turn of doubling? Soon it grew irksome even to think of you; yet still when I did, I said, 'Life is long, I shall win riches; he shall share them some day or other!'—*Basta, basta!*—what idle twaddle or hollow brag all this must seem to you!"

"No," said Waife, feebly, and his hand drooped till it touched Jasper's bended shoulder, but at the touch recoiled as if with an electric spasm.

"So, as you say, you found me at Paris. I told you where I had placed the child, not conceiving that Arabella would part with her, or you desire to hamper yourself with an encumbrance,—nay, I took for granted that you would find a home as before with some old friend or country cousin:—but fancying that your occasional visits to her might comfort you, since it seemed to please you so much when I said she lived. Thus we parted,—you, it seems, only anxious to save that child from ever falling into my hands, or those of Gabrielle Desmarets; I hastening to forget all but the riotous life around me till—"

"Till you came back to England to rob from me the smile of the only face that I knew would never wear contempt, and to tell the good man with whom I thought she had so safe a shelter, that I was a convicted robber, by whose very love her infancy was sullied. O Jasper! Jasper!"

"I never said that—never thought of saying it. Arabella Crane did so, with the reckless woman-will, to gain her object. But I did take the child from you. Why? Partly because I needed money so much that I would have sold a hecatomb of children for half what I was offered to bind the girl to a service that could not be very dreadful, since yourself had first placed her there;—and partly because you had shrunk, it seems, from appealing to old friends: you were living, like myself, from hand to mouth; what could that child be to you but a drag and a bother?"

"And you will tell me, I suppose," said Waife, with an incredulous bitter irony, that seemed to wither himself in venting it, so did his whole frame recoil and shrink—"you will tell me that it was from the same considerate tenderness that you would have again filched her from me some months later, to place her with that 'she-devil' who was once more by your side; to be reared and sold to—oh horror!—horror!—unimaginable horror!—that pure helpless infant!—you, armed with the name of father!—you, strong in that mighty form of man!"

"What do you mean? Oh, I remember now! When Gabrielle was in London, and I had seen you on the bridge?

Who could have told you that I meant to get the child from you at that time?"

Waife was silent. He could not betray Arabella Crane; and Jasper looked perplexed and thoughtful. Then gradually the dreadful nature of his father's accusing words seemed to become more clear to him; and he cried, with a fierce start and a swarthy flush—"But whoever told you that I harboured the design that it whitens your lips to hint at, lied, and foully. Harkye, sir, many years ago Gabrielle had made acquaintance with Darrell, under another name, as Matilda's friend (long story now—not worth telling); he had never, I believe, discovered the imposture. Just at the time you refer to, I heard that Darrell had been to France, inquiring himself into facts connected with my former story that Matilda's child was dead. That very inquiry seemed to show that he had not been so incredulous of my assertions of Sophy's claims on him as he had affected to be when I urged them. He then went on into Italy. Talking this over with Gabrielle, she suggested, that if the child could be got into her possession, she would go with her in search of Darrell, resuming the name in which she had before known him—resuming the title and privilege of Matilda's friend. In that character he might listen to her, when he would not to me. She might confirm my statement—melt his heart—coax him into terms. She was the cleverest creature! I should have sold Sophy, it is true. For what? A provision to place me above want and crime. Sold her to whom? To the man who would see in her his daughter's child, rear her to inherit his wealth—guard her as his own honour. What! was this the design that so shocks you? *Basta, basta!* Again, I say, Enough. I never thought I should be so soft as to mutter excuses for what I have done. And if I do so now, the words seem forced from me against my will—forced from me, as if in seeing you I was again but a wild, lawless, wilful boy, who grieved to see you saddened by his faults, though he forgot his grief the moment you were out of sight."

"Oh, Jasper," cried Waife, now fairly placing his hand on Jasper's guilty head, and fixing his bright soft eye, swimming in tears, on that downcast gloomy face. "You repent!—you repent! Yes; call back your BOYHOOD—call it back! Let it stand before you, now, visible, palpable!

Lo! I see it! Do not you? Fearless, joyous Image! Wild, lawless, wilful, as you say. Wild from exuberant life; lawless as a bird is free, because air is boundless to untried exulting wings; wilful from the ease with which the bravery and beauty of Nature's radiant Darling forced way for each jocund whim through our yielding hearts! Silence! It is there! I see it, as I saw it rise in the empty air when guilt and ignominy first darkened round you; and my heart cried aloud, 'Not on him, not on him, not on that glorious shape of hope and promise—on me, whose life, useless hitherto, has lost all promise now—on me let fall the shame.' And my lips obeyed my heart, and I said—'Let the Laws' will be done—I am the guilty man.' Cruel, cruel one! Was that sunny Boyhood then so long departed from you? On the verge of youth, and such maturity in craft and fraud—that when you stole into my room that dark winter eve, threw yourself at my feet, spoke but of thoughtless debts, and the fear that you should be thrust from an industrious honest calling, and I—I said—'No, no; fear not; the head of your firm likes you; he has written to me; I am trying already to raise the money you need; it shall be raised, no matter what it cost me; you shall be saved; my Lizzie's son shall never know the soil of a prison; shun temptation henceforth: be but honest, and I shall be repaid!'—what, even *then*, you were coldly meditating the crime that will make my very grave dishonoured!"

"Meditating—not so! How could I be? Not till after what had thus passed between us, when you spoke with such indulgent kindness, did I even know that I might more than save myself—by moneys—not raised at risk and loss to you! Remember, you had left me in the inner room, while you went forth to speak with Gunston. There I overheard him talk of notes he had never counted, and might never miss; describe the very place where they were kept; and then the idea came to me irresistibly; 'better rob him than despoil my own generous father.' Sir, I am not pretending to be better than I was. I was not quite the novice you supposed. Coveting pleasures or shows not within my reach, I had shrunk from draining you to supply the means; I had not had the same forbearance for the superfluous wealth of others. I had learned with what simple tools old locks may fly open; and none had ever suspected

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me, so I had no fear of danger, small need of premeditation; a nail on your mantelpiece, the cloven end of the hammer lying beside, to crook it when hot from the fire that blazed before me! I say this to show you that I did not come provided; nothing was planned beforehand; all was the project and work of the moment. Such was my haste, I burnt myself to the bone with the red iron—feeling no pain, or rather, at that age, bearing all pain without wincing. Before Gunston left you, my whole plan was then arranged—my sole instrument fashioned. You groan. But how could I fancy that there would be detection? How imagine, that even if moneys, never counted, *were* missed, suspicion could fall on you—better gentleman than he whom you served? And had it not been for that accursed cloak which you so fondly wrapped round me when I set off to catch the night train back to ——; if it had not been, I say, for that cloak, there could have been no evidence to criminate either you or me—except that unlucky £5 note, which I pressed on you when we met at ——, where I was to hide till you had settled with my duns. And why did I press it on you?—because you had asked me if I had wherewithal about me on which to live meanwhile; and I, to save you from emptying your own purse, said—'Yes;' showed you some gold, and pressed on you the bank-note, which I said I could not want—to go, in small part, towards my debts; it was a childish, inconsistent wish to please you: and you seemed so pleased to take it as a proof that I cared for you."

"For me!—no, no; for honour—for honour—for honour! I thought you cared for honour; and the proof of that care was, thrusting into these credulous hands the share of your midnight plunder!"

"Sir," resumed Jasper, persisting in the same startling combination of feeling, gentler and more reverential than could have been supposed to linger in his breast, and of the moral obtuseness that could not, save by vanishing glimpses, distinguish between crime and its consequences—between dishonour and detection—"Sir, I declare that I never conceived that I was exposing you to danger; nay, I meant, out of the money I had taken, to replace to you what you were about to raise, as soon as I could invent some plausible story of having earned it honestly. Stupid notions and clumsy schemes, as I now look back on them,

but, as you say, I had not long left boyhood, and, fancying myself deep and knowing, was raw in the craft I had practised. *Basta, basta, basta!*"

Jasper, who had risen from his knees while speaking, here stamped heavily on the floor, as if with anger at the heart-stricken aspect of his silenced father; and continued with a voice that seemed struggling to regain its old imperious, rollicking, burly swell.

"What is done cannot be undone. Fling it aside, sir—look to the future; you with your pedlar's pack, I with my empty pockets! What can save you from the workhouse—me from the hulks or gibbet? I know not, unless the persons sheltering that girl will buy me off by some provision which may be shared between us. Tell me, then, where she is; leave me to deal in the business as I best may. Pooh! why so scared? I will neither terrify nor kidnap her. I will shuffle off the crust of blackguard that has hardened round me. I will be sleek and smooth, as if I were still the exquisite Lothario—copied by would-be rufflers, and spoiled by willing beauties. Oh, I can still play the gentleman, at least for an hour or two, if it be worth my while. Come, sir, come; trust me; out with the secret of this hidden maiden, whose interests should surely weigh not more with you than those of a starving son. What, you will not? Be it so. I suspect that I know where to look for her—on what noble thresholds to set my daring foot; what fair lady, mindful of former days—of girlish friendship—of virgin love—wraps in compassionate luxury Guy Darrell's rejected heiress! Ah, your looks tell me that I am hot on the scent. That fair lady I knew of old; she is rich—I helped to make her so. She owes me something. I will call and remind her of it. And—tut, sir, tut—you shall not go to the workhouse, nor I to the hulks."

Here the old man, hitherto seated, rose—slowly, with feebleness and effort, till he gained his full height; then age, infirmity, and weakness, seemed to vanish. In the erect head, the broad massive chest, in the whole presence, there was dignity—there was power.

"Hark to me, unhappy reprobate, and heed me well! To save that child from the breath of disgrace—to place her in what you yourself assured me were her rights amidst those in whose dwellings I lost the privilege to

dwell when I took to myself your awful burthen—I thought to resign her charge for ever in this world. Think not that I will fly her now, when you invade. No—since my prayers will not move you—since my sacrifice to you has been so fruitless—since my absence from herself does not attain its end; there, where you find her, shall you again meet me! And if there we meet, and you come with the intent to destroy her peace and blast her fortune, then I, William Losely, am no more the felon. In the face of day I will proclaim the truth, and say, 'Robber, change place in earth's scorn with me; stand in the dock, where thy father stood in vain to save thee!'"

"Bah, sir—too late now; who would listen to you?"

"All who have once known me—all will listen. Friends of power and station will take up my cause. There will be fresh inquiry into facts that I held back—evidence that, in pleading guilty, I suppressed—ungrateful one—to ward away suspicion from you."

"Say what you will," said Jasper, swaying his massive form to and fro, with a rolling gesture which spoke of cold defiance, "I am no hypocrite in fair repute whom such threats would frighten. If you choose to thwart me in what I always held my last resource for meat and drink, I must stand in the dock even, perhaps, on a heavier charge than one so stale. Each for himself; do your worst—what does it matter?"

"What does it matter that a father should accuse his son! No, no—son, son, son—this must not be;—Let it not be!—let me complete my martyrdom! I ask no reversal of man's decree, except before the Divine Tribunal. Jasper, Jasper—child of my love, spare the sole thing left to fill up the chasms in the heart that you laid waste. Speak not of starving, or of fresh crime. Stay—share this refuge! I WILL WORK FOR BOTH!"

Once more, and this time thoroughly, Jasper's hideous levity and coarse bravado gave way before the lingering human sentiment knitting him back to childhood, which the sight and voice of his injured father had called forth with spasms and throes, as a seer calls the long-buried from a grave. And as the old man extended his arms pleadingly towards him, Jasper, with a gasping sound—half groan, half sob—sprang forward, caught both the hands in his own strong grasp, lifted them to his lips, kissed them, and

then, gaining the door with a rapid stride, said, in hoarse broken tones, "Share your refuge! no—no—I should break your heart downright did you see me daily—hourly as I am! You work for both!—you—you!" His voice stopped, choked for a brief moment, then hurried on: "As for that girl—you—you—you are—but no matter, I will try to obey you—will try to wrestle against hunger, despair, and thoughts that whisper sinking men with devil's tongues. I will try—I will try; if I succeed not, keep your threat—accuse me—give me up to justice—clear yourself; but if you would crush me more than by the heaviest curse, never again speak to me with such dreadful tenderness! Cling not to me, old man; release me, I say;—there—there;—off. Ah! I did not hurt you? Brute that I am—you bless me—you—you! And I dare not bless again! Let me go—let me go—let me go!" He wrenched himself away from his father's clasp—drowning with loud tone his father's pathetic soothings—out of the house—down the hill—lost to sight in the shades of the falling eve.

CHAPTER VI.

Gentleman Waife does not forget an old friend. The old friend reconciles Astrology to Prudence, and is under the influence of Benefics. Mr. Hartopp hat in hand to Gentleman Waife.

WAIFE fell on the floor of his threshold, exclaiming, sobbing, moaning, as voice itself gradually died away. The dog, who had been shut out from the house, and remained, ears erect, head drooping, close at the door, rushed in as Jasper burst forth. The two listeners at the open casement now stole round; there was the dog, its paw on the old man's shoulder, trying to attract his notice, and whining low.

Tenderly—reverentially, they lift the poor martyr—evermore cleared in their eyes from stain, from question; the dishonouring brand transmuted into the hallowing cross! And when the old man at length recovered consciousness, his head was pillowed on the breast of the spotless, noble Preacher; and the decorous English Trader, with instinctive deference for repute and respect for law, was kneeling by his side, clasping his hand; and as Waife glanced down,

confusedly wondering, Hartopp exclaimed, half sobbing, "Forgive me; you said I should repent if I knew all! I do repent! I do! Forgive me—I shall never forgive myself."

"Have I been dreaming? What is all this? You here, too, Mr. George! But—but there was ANOTHER. Gone! ah—gone—gone! lost, lost! Ha! did you overhear us?"

"We overheard you—at that window! See, spite of yourself, Heaven lets your innocence be known, and in that innocence, your sublime self-sacrifice."

"Hush! you will never betray me, either of you—never! A father turn against his son!—horrible!"

Again he seemed on the point of swooning. In a few moments more, his mind began evidently to wander somewhat; and just as Merle (who, with his urchin-guide had wandered vainly over the old town in search of the pedlar, until told that he had been seen in a by-street, stopped and accosted by a tall man in a rough great-coat, and then hurrying off, followed by the stranger) came back to report his ill-success, Hartopp and George had led Waife up-stairs into his sleeping-room, laid him down on his bed, and were standing beside him watching his troubled face, and whispering to each other in alarm.

Waife overheard Hartopp proposing to go in search of medical assistance, and exclaimed piteously, "No, that would scare me to death. No doctors—no eavesdroppers. Leave me to myself—quiet and darkness; I shall be well to-morrow."

George drew the curtains round the bed, and Waife caught him by the arm. "You will not let out what you heard, I know; you understand how little I can now care for men's judgments; but how dreadful it would be to undo all I have done—I to be witness against my Lizzy's child! I—I! I trust you—dear, dear Mr. Morley; make Mr. Hartopp sensible that, if he would not drive me mad, not a syllable of what he heard must go forth—'twould be base in him."

"Nay!" said Hartopp, whispering also through the dark,—"Don't fear me; I will hold my peace, though 'tis very hard not to tell Williams at least that you did not take me in. But you shall be obeyed."

They drew away Merle, who was wondering what the whispered talk was about, catching a word or two here

and there, and left the old man not quite to solitude,—Waife's hand, in quitting George's grasp, dropped on the dog's head.

Hartopp went back to his daughter's home in a state of great excitement, drinking more wine than usual at dinner, talking more magisterially than he had ever been known to talk, railing quite misanthropically against the world; observing, that Williams had become unsufferably overbearing, and should be pensioned off: in short, casting the whole family into the greatest perplexity to guess what had come to the mild man. Merle found himself a lodging, and cast a horary scheme as to what would happen to Waife and himself for the next three months, and found all the aspects so perversely contradictory, that he owned he was no wiser as to the future than he was before the scheme was cast. George Morley remained in the Cottage, stealing up, from time to time, to Waife's room, but not fatiguing him with talk. Before midnight, the old man slept, but his slumber was much perturbed, as if by fearful dreams. However, he rose early, very weak, but free from fever, and in full possession of his reason. To George's delight, Waife's first words to him then were expressive of a wish to return to Sophy. "He had dreamed," he said, "that he had heard her voice calling out to him to come to her help." He would not revert to the scene with Jasper. George once ventured to touch on that reminiscence, but the old man's look became so imploring that he desisted. Nevertheless, it was evident to the Pastor, that Waife's desire of return was induced by his belief that he had become necessary to Sophy's protection. Jasper, whose remorse would probably be very shortlived, had clearly discovered Sophy's residence, and as clearly Waife, and Waife alone, still retained some hold over his rugged breast. Perhaps, too, the old man had no longer the same dread of encountering Jasper; rather, perhaps, a faint hope that, in another meeting, he might more availingly soften his son's heart. He was not only willing, then—he was eager to depart, and either regained or assumed much of his old cheerfulness in settling with his hostess, and parting with Merle, on whom he forced his latest savings, and the tasteful contents of his pannier. Then he took aside George, and whispered in his ear, "A very honest, kind-hearted man, sir; can you deliver him from the Planets?—they

bring him into sad trouble. Is there no opening for a cobbler at Humberston?"

George nodded, and went back to Merle, who was wiping his eyes with his coat-sleeve. "My good friend," said the scholar, "do me two favours, besides the greater one you have already bestowed in conducting me back to a revered friend. First, let me buy of you the contents of that basket; I have children amongst whom I would divide them as heir-looms; next, as we were travelling hither, you told me that, in your younger days, ere you took to a craft which does not seem to have prospered, you were brought up to country pursuits, and knew all about cows and sheep, their care and their maladies. Well, I have a few acres of glebe-land on my own hands, not enough for a bailiff—too much for my gardener—and a pretty cottage, which once belonged to a schoolmaster, but we have built him a larger one; it is now vacant, and at your service. Come and take all trouble of land and stock off my hands; we shall not quarrel about the salary. But harkye, my friend—on one proviso—give up the Crystal, and leave the Stars to mind their own business."

"Please your Reverence," said Merle, who, at the earlier part of the address, had evinced the most grateful emotion, but who, at the proviso which closed it, jerked himself up, dignified and displeased—"Please your Reverence, no! Kit Merle is not so unnatural as to swop away his Significator at Birth for a mess of porritch! There was that forrin chap, Gally-Leo—he stuck to the stars, or the sun, which is the same thing—and the stars stuck by him, and brought him honour and glory, though the Parsons war dead agin him. He had Malefics in his Ninth House, which belongs to Parsons."

"Can't the matter be compromised, dear Mr. George?" said Waife, persuasively. "Suppose Merle promises to keep his crystal and astrological schemes to himself, or at least only talk of them to you;—they can't hurt you, I should think, sir? And science is a sacred thing, Merle; and the Chaldees, who were the great star-gazers, never degraded themselves by showing off to the vulgar. Mr. George, who is a scholar, will convince you of that fact."

"Content," said George. "So long as Mr. Merle will leave my children and servants, and the parish generally, in happy ignorance of the future, I give him the fullest

leave to discuss his science with myself whenever we chat together on summer noons or in winter evenings; and perhaps I may——"

"Be converted?" said Waife, with a twinkling gleam of the playful Humour which had ever sported along his thorny way by the side of Sorrow.

"I did not mean that," said the Parson, smiling; "rather the contrary. What say you, Merle? Is it not a bargain?"

"Sir—God bless you!" cried Merle, simply; "I see you won't let me stand in my own light. And what Gentleman Waife says as to the vulgar, is uncommon true."

This matter settled, and Merle's future secured in a way that his stars, or his version of their language, had not foretold to him, George and Waife walked on to the station, Merle following with the Parson's small carpet-bag, and Sir Isaac charged with Waife's bundle. They had not gone many yards before they met Hartopp, who was indeed on his way to Prospect Row. He was vexed at learning Waife was about to leave so abruptly; he had set his heart on coaxing him to return to Gatesboro' with himself—astounding Williams and Mrs. H., and proclaiming to Market Place and High Street, that, in deeming Mr. Chapman a good and a great man disguised, he, Josiah Hartopp, had not been taken in. He consoled himself a little for Waife's refusal of this kind invitation and unexpected departure, by walking proudly beside him to the station, finding it thronged with passengers—some of them great burgesses of Ouzelford—in whose presence he kept bowing his head to Waife with every word he uttered; and, calling the guard—who was no stranger to his own name and importance—he told him pompously to be particularly attentive to that elderly gentleman, and see that he and his companion had a carriage to themselves all the way, and that Sir Isaac had a particularly comfortable box. "A very great man," he said, with his finger to his lip, "only he will not have it known—just at present." The guard stares, and promises all deference—opens the door of a central first-class carriage—assures Waife that he and his friend shall not be disturbed by other passengers. The train heaves into movement—Hartopp runs on by its side along the stand—his hat off—kissing his hand; then, as the convoy shoots under yon dark tunnel, and is lost to

sight, he turns back, and seeing Merle, says to him, "You know that gentleman—the old one?"

"Yes, a many year."

"Ever heard anything against him?"

"Yes, once—at Gatesboro'."

"At Gatesboro'!—ah! and you did not believe it?"

"Only jist for a moment, transiting."

"I envy you," said Hartopp; and he went off with a sigh.

CHAPTER VII.

Jasper Losely in his element. O young Reader, whomsoever thou art, on whom Nature has bestowed her magnificent gift of physical power with the joys it commands, with the daring that springs from it—on closing this chapter, pause a moment, and think—"What wilt thou do with it?" Shall it be brute-like or God-like? With what advantage for life—its delights or its perils—toils borne with ease, and glories cheap-bought—dost thou start at life's onset? Give thy sinews a Mind that conceives the Heroic, and what noble things thou mayst do! But value thy sinews for rude Strength alone, and that strength may be turned to thy shame and thy torture. The Wealth of thy life will but tempt to its Waste. Abuse, at first felt not, will poison the uses of Sense. Wild bulls gore and trample their foes. Thou hast SOUL! Wilt thou trample and gore it?

JASPER LOSELY, on quitting his father, spent his last coins in payment for his horse's food, and in fiery drink for himself. In haste he mounted—in haste he spurred on to London; not even pence for the toll-bars. Where he found the gates open, he dashed through them headlong; where closed, as the night advanced, he forced his horse across the fields over hedge and ditch—more than once the animal falling with him—more than once thrown from the saddle; for, while a most daring, he was not a very practised rider; but it was not easy to break bones so strong, and though bruised and dizzy, he continued his fierce way. At morning his horse was thoroughly exhausted, and at the first village he reached after sunrise, he left the poor beast at an inn, and succeeded in borrowing of the landlord £1 on the pawn of the horse thus left as hostage. Resolved to husband this sum, he performed the rest of his journey on foot. He reached London at night, and went straight to Cutt's lodgings. Cutts was, however, in the club-room of those dark associates against whom Losely had been warned. Oblivious of his solemn

promise to Arabella, Jasper startled the revellers as he stalked into the room, and towards the chair of honour at the far end of it, on which he had been accustomed to lord it over the fell groups he had treated out of Poole's purse: One of the biggest and most redoubted of the Black Family was now in that seat of dignity, and refusing surlily to yield it at Jasper's rude summons, was seized by the scuff of the neck, and literally hurled on the table in front, coming down with clatter and clash amongst mugs and glasses. Jasper seated himself coolly, while the hubbub began to swell—and roared for drink. An old man, who served as drawer to these cavaliers, went out to obey the order; and when he was gone, those near the door swung across it a heavy bar. Wrath against the domineering intruder was gathering, and waited but the moment to explode. Jasper turning round his bloodshot eyes, saw Cutts within a few chairs of him, seeking to shrink out of sight.

"Cutts, come hither," cried he, imperiously.

Cutts did not stir.

"Throw me that cur this way—you, who sit next him."

"Don't, don't; his mad fit is on him; he will murder me—murder me, who have helped and saved you all so often. Stand by me."

"We will," said both his neighbours, the one groping for his case-knife, the other for his revolver.

"Do you fear I should lop your ears, dog," cried Jasper, "for shrinking from my side with your tail between your legs? Pooh! I scorn to waste force on a thing so small. After all, I am glad you left me; I did not want you. You will find your horse at an inn in the village of ——. I will pay for its hire whenever we meet again. Meanwhile, find another master—I discharge you. *Mille tonnerres!* why does that weasel-faced snail not bring me the brandy? By your leave,"—and he appropriated to himself the brimming glass of his next neighbour. Thus refreshed, he glanced round through the reek of tobacco smoke; saw the man he had dislodged, and who, rather amazed than stunned by his fall, had kept silence on rising, and was now ominously interchanging muttered words with two of his comrades, who were also on their legs. Jasper turned from him contemptuously;—with increasing contempt in his hard fierce sneer, noted the lowering frowns on

either side the Pandemonium; and it was only with an angry flash from his eyes that he marked, on closing his survey, the bar dropped across the door, and two forms, knife in hand, stationed at the threshold.

"Aha! my jolly companions," said he then, "you do right to bar the door. Prudent families can't settle their quarrels too snugly amongst themselves. I am come here on purpose to give you all a proper scolding, and if some of you don't hang your heads for shame before I have done, you'll die more game than I think for, whenever you come to the last Drop."

He rose as he thus spoke, folding his sinewy arms across his wide chest. Most of the men had risen too—some, however, remained seated; there might be eighteen or twenty in all. Every eye was fixed on him, and many a hand was on a deadly weapon.

"Scum of the earth!" burst forth Jasper, with voice like a roll of thunder, "I stooped to come amongst you—I shared amongst you my money. Was any one of you too poor to pay up his club fee—to buy a draught of Forgetfulness—I said, 'Brother, take!' Did brawl break out in your jollities—were knives drawn—a throat in danger—this right hand struck down the uproar, crushed back the coward murder. If I did not join in your rogueries, it was because they were sneaking and pitiful. I came as your Patron, not as your Pal; I did not meddle with your secrets—did not touch your plunder. I owed you nothing. Offal that you are! to me you owed drink, and meat, and good fellowship. I gave you mirth, and I gave you Law; and in return ye laid a plot amongst you to get rid of me;—how, ye white-livered scoundrels? Oho! not by those fists, and knives, and bludgeons. All your pigeon breasts clubbed together had not manhood for that. But to palm off upon me some dastardly deed of your own; by snares and scraps of false evidence—false oaths, too, no doubt—to smuggle me off to the hangman. That was your precious contrivance. Once again I am here; but this once only. What for?—why, to laugh at, and spit at, and spurn you. And if one man amongst you has in him an ounce of man's blood, let him show me the traitors who planned that pitiful project, and be they a dozen, they shall carry the mark of this hand till their carcasses go to the surgeon's scalpel."

He ceased. Though each was now hustling the other towards him, and the whole pack of miscreants was closing up, like hounds round a wild boar at bay, the only one who gave audible tongue was that thin splinter of life called Cutts!

"Look you, General Jas., it was all a mistake your ever coming here. You were a fine fellow once, particularly in the French way of doing business—large prizes and lots of row. That don't suit us; we are quiet Englishmen. You brag of beating and bullying the gentlemen who admit you amongst them, and of not sharing their plans or risks; but that sort of thing is quite out of order—no precedent for it. How do we know that you are not a spy, or could not be made one, since you say you owe us nothing, and hold us in such scorn? Truth is, we are all sick of you. You say you only come this once: very well, you have spun your yarn—now go. That's all we want; go in peace, and never trouble us again. Gentlemen, I move that General Jas. be expelled this club, and requested to withdraw."

"I second it," said the man whom Jasper had flung on the table.

"Those who are in favour of the resolution, hold up their hands;—all—carried unanimously. General Jas. is expelled."

"Expel me!" said Jasper, who in the meanwhile, swaying to and fro his brawny bulk, had cleared the space round him, and stood resting his hands on the heavy arm-chair from which he had risen.

A hostile and simultaneous movement of the group brought four or five of the foremost on him. Up rose the chair on which Jasper had leaned—up it rose in his right hand, and two of the assailants fell as falls an ox to the butcher's blow. With his left hand he wrenched a knife from a third of the foes, and thus armed with blade and buckler, he sprang on the table, towering over all. Before him was the man with the revolver, a genteeler outlaw than the rest—ticket-of-leave man, who had been transported for forgery. "Shall I shoot him?" whispered this knave to Cutts. Cutts drew back the hesitating arm. "No; the noise! bludgeons safer." Pounce, as Cutts whispered—pounce as a hawk on its quarry, darted Jasper's swoop on the Forger, and the next moment, flinging the chair in the faces of those who were now swarming up the

table, Jasper was armed with the revolver, which he had clutched from its startled owner, and its six barrels threatened death, right and left, beside and before and around him, as he turned from face to face. Instantly there fell a hush—instantly the assault paused. Every one felt that there no faltering would make the hand tremble or the ball swerve. Wherever Jasper turned the foes recoiled. He laughed with audacious mockery as he surveyed the recreants.

"Down with your arms, each of you—down that knife, down that bludgeon. That's well. Down yours—there; yours—yours. What, all down! Pile them here on the table at my feet. Dogs, what do you fear?—death? The first who refuses dies."

Mute and servile as a repentant Legion to a Cæsar's order, the knaves piled their weapons.

"Unbar the door, you two. You, orator Cutts, go in front; light a candle—open the street-door. So—so—so. Who will treat me with a parting cup—to your healths? Thank you, sir. Fall back there; stand back—along the wall—each of you. Line my way. Ho, ho!—*you* harm me—*you* daunt me—you—you! Stop—I have a resolution to propose. Hear it, and cheer. 'That this meeting rescinds the resolution for the expulsion of General Jasper, and entreats him humbly to remain, the pride and ornament of the club!' Those who are for that resolution, hold up their hands—as many as are against it, theirs. Carried unanimously. Gentlemen, I thank you—proudest day of my life—but I'll see you hanged first; and till that sight diverts me,—gentlemen, your health."

Descending from his eminence, he passed slowly down the room unscathed, unmenaced, and, with a low mocking bow at the threshold, strode along the passage to the street-door. There, seeing Cutts with the light in his hand, he uncocked the pistol, striking off the caps, and giving it to his quondam associate, said—"Return that to its owner, with my compliments. One word—speak truth, and fear nothing. Did you send help to Darrell?"

"No; I swear it."

"I am sorry for it. I should like to have owed so trusty a friend that one favour. Go back to your pals. Understand now why I scorned to work with such rotten tools."

"A wonderful fellow, indeed!" muttered Cutts, as his eye followed the receding form of the triumphant bravo. "All London might look to itself, if he had more solid brains, and less liquid fire in them."

CHAPTER VIII.

Jasper Losely sleeps under the portico from which Falsehood was borne by Black Horses. He forgets a promise, reweaves a scheme, visits a river-side; and a door closes on the Strong Man and the Grim Woman.

JASPER had satisfied the wild yearnings of his wounded vanity. He had vindicated his claim to hardihood and address, which it seemed to him he had forfeited in his interview with Darrell. With crest erect and a positive sense of elation, of animal joy that predominated over hunger, fatigue, remorse, he strided on—he knew not whither. He would not go back to his former lodgings; they were too familiarly known to the set which he had just flung from him, with a vague resolve to abjure henceforth all accomplices, and trust to himself alone. The hour was now late—the streets deserted—the air bitingly cold. Must he at last resign himself to the loathed dictation of Arabella Crane. Well, he now preferred even that to humbling himself to Darrell, after what had passed. Darrell's parting words had certainly implied that he would not be as obdurate to entreaty as he had shown himself to threats. But Jasper was in no humour to entreat. Mechanically he continued to stride on towards the solitary district in which Arabella held her home; but the night was now so far advanced that he shrunk from disturbing the grim woman at that hour—almost as respectfully afraid of her dark eye and stern voice as the outlaws he had quitted were of his own crushing hand and levelled pistol. So, finding himself in one of the large squares of Bloomsbury, he gathered himself up under the sheltering porch of a spacious mansion, unconscious that it was the very residence which Darrell had once occupied, and that from that portico the Black Horses had borne away the mother of his wife. In a few minutes he was fast asleep—sleeping with such heavy deathlike soundness, that the policeman passing him on his beat, after one or two vain

attempts to rouse him, was seized with a rare compassion, and suffered the weary outcast to slumber on.

When Jasper woke at last in the grey dawn, he felt a strange numbness in his limbs; it was even with difficulty that he could lift himself up. This sensation gradually wearing off, was followed by a quick tingling down the arms to the tips of the fingers. A gloomy noise rang in his ears, like the boom of funeral church-bells; and the pavement seemed to be sliding from under him. Little heeding these symptoms, which he ascribed to cold and want of food, and rather agreeably surprised not to feel the gnaw of his accustomed pains, Jasper now betook himself to Podden Place. The house was still unclosed; and it was not till Jasper's knock had been pretty often repeated, that the bolts were withdrawn from the door, and Bridgett Greggs appeared. "Oh, it is you, Mr. Losely," she said, with much sullenness, but with no apparent surprise. "Mistress thought you would come while she was away, and I'm to get you the bedroom you had, over the stationer's, six years ago, if you like it. You are to take your meals here, and have the best of everything; that's mistress's orders."

"Oh, Mrs. Crane is out of town," said Jasper, much relieved; "where has she gone?"

"I don't know."

"When will she be back?"

"In a few days; so she told me. Will you walk in, and have breakfast? Mistress said there was to be always plenty in the house—you might come any moment. Please scrape your feet."

Jasper heavily mounted into the drawing-room, and impatiently awaited the substantial refreshments, which were soon placed before him. The room looked unaltered, as if he had left it but the day before—the prim book shelves—the empty birdcage—the broken lute—the patent easy-chair—the footstool—the sofa, which had been added to the original furniture for his express comfort, in the days when he was first adopted as a son—nay, on the hearth-rug the very slippers, on the back of the chair the very dressing-gown, graciously worn by him while yet the fairness of his form justified his fond respect for it.

For that day he was contented with the negative luxury of complete repose; the more so as, in every attempt to

move, he felt the same numbness of limb as that with which he had woke, accompanied by a kind of painful weight at the back of the head, and at the junction which the great seat of intelligence forms at the spine with the great mainspring of force; and, withal, a reluctance to stir, and a more than usual inclination to doze. But the next day, though these unpleasant sensations continued, his impatience of thought and hate of solitude made him anxious to go forth and seek some distraction. No distraction left to him but the gaming-table—no companions but fellow-victims in that sucking whirlpool. Well, he knew a low gaming-house, open all day as all night. Wishing to add somewhat to the miserable remains of the £1 borrowed on the horse, that made all his capital, he asked Bridgett, indifferently, to oblige him with two or three sovereigns; if she had them not, she might borrow them in the neighbourhood till her mistress returned. Bridgett answered, with ill-simulated glee, that her mistress had given positive orders that Mr. Losely was to have everything he called for except—money. Jasper coloured with wrath and shame; but he said no more—whistled—took his hat—went out—repaired to the gaming-house—lost his last shilling, and returned moodily to dine in Podden Place. The austerity of the room, the loneliness of the evening, began now to inspire him with unmitigated disgust, which was added in fresh account to his old score of repugnance for the absent Arabella. The affront put upon him in the orders which Bridgett had so faithfully repeated, made him yet more distastefully contemplate the dire necessity of falling under the rigid despotism of this determined guardian: it was like going back to a preparatory school, to be mulcted of pocket-money, and set in a dark corner! But what other resource? None but appeal to Darrell—still more intolerable; except—he paused in his cogitation, shook his head, muttered "No, no." But that "except" *would* return!—except to forget his father's prayer and his own promise—except to hunt out Sophy, and extract from the generosity, compassion, or fear of her protectress, some such conditions as he would have wrung from Darrell. He had no doubt now that the girl was with Lady Montfort; he felt that, if she really loved Sophy, and were sheltering her in tender recollection, whether of Matilda or of Darrell himself, he might much

more easily work on the delicate nerves of a woman, shrinking from all noise and scandal, than he could on the stubborn pride of his resolute father-in-law. Perhaps it was on account of Sophy—perhaps to plead for her—that Lady Montfort had gone to Fawley; perhaps the grief visible on that lady's countenance, as he caught so hasty a glimpse of it, might be occasioned by the failure of her mission. If so, there might be now some breach or dissension between her and Darrell, which might render the Marchioness still more accessible to his demands. As for his father—if Jasper played his cards well and luckily, his father might never know of his disobedience; he might coax or frighten Lady Montfort into secresy. It might be quite unnecessary for him even to see Sophy; if she caught sight of him, she would surely no more recognise his altered features than Rugge had done. These thoughts gathered on him stronger and stronger all the evening, and grew into resolves with the next morning. He sallied out after breakfast—the same numbness; but he walked it off. Easy enough to find the address of the Marchioness of Montfort. He asked it boldly of the porter at the well-known house of the present Lord, and, on learning it, proceeded at once to Richmond—on foot, and thence to the small, scattered hamlet immediately contiguous to Lady Montfort's villa. Here he found two or three idle boatmen lounging near the river-side; and entering into conversation with them about their craft, which was sufficiently familiar to him, for he had plied the strongest oar on that tide in the holidays of his youth, he proceeded to inquiries, which were readily and unsuspectedly answered. "Yes, there *was* a young lady with Lady Montfort; they did not know her name. They had seen her often in the lawn—seen her, too, at church. She was very pretty; yes, she had blue eyes and fair hair." Of his father he only heard that "there had been an old gentleman such as he described—lame, and with one eye—who had lived some months ago in a cottage on Lady Montfort's grounds. They heard he had gone away. He had made baskets—they did not know if for sale; if so, perhaps for a charity. They supposed he was a gentleman, for they heard he was some relation to the young lady. But Lady Montfort's head coachman lived in the village, and could, no doubt, give him all the information he required." Jasper was too wary to call on the

coachman; he had learned enough for the present. Had he prosecuted his researches farther, he might only have exposed himself to questions, and to the chance of his inquiries being repeated to Lady Montfort by one of her servants, and thus setting her on her guard; for no doubt his father had cautioned her against him. It never occurred to him that the old man could already have returned; and those to whom he confined his interrogatories were quite ignorant of the fact. Jasper had no intention to intrude himself that day on Lady Montfort. His self-love shrank from presenting himself to a lady of such rank, and to whom he had been once presented on equal terms, as the bridegroom of her friend and the confidential visitor to her mother, in habiliments that bespoke so utter a fall. Better, too, on all accounts, to appear something of a gentleman; more likely to excite pity for suffering—less likely to suggest excuse for rebutting his claims, and showing him to the door. Nay, indeed, so dressed, in that villanous pea-jacket, and with all other habiliments to match, would any servant admit him?—could he get into Lady Montfort's presence? He must go back—wait for Mrs. Crane's return. Doubtless she would hail his wish—half a reform in itself—to cast off the outward signs of an accepted degradation.

Accordingly he went back to town in much better spirits, and so absorbed in his hopes, that, when he arrived at Podden Place, he did not observe that, from some obliquity of vision, or want of the normal correspondence between will and muscle, his hand twice missed the knocker—wandering first above, then below it; and that, when actually in his clasp, he did not feel the solid iron: the sense of touch seemed suspended. Bridgett appeared. "Mistress is come back, and will see you."

Jasper did not look charmed; he winced, but screwed up his courage, and mounted the stairs—slowly—heavily. From the landing-place above glared down the dark shining eyes that had almost quailed his bold spirit nearly six years before; and almost in the same words as then, a voice as exulting, but less stern, said,—"So you come at last to me, Jasper Losely—you are come." Rapidly—flittingly, with a step noiseless as a spectre's, Arabella Crane descended the stairs; but she did not, as when he first sought that house in the years before, grasp his hand

or gaze into his face. Rather, it was with a shrinking avoidance of his touch—with something like a shudder—that she glided by him into the open drawing-room, beckoning him to follow. He halted a moment; he felt a longing to retreat—to fly the house; his superstitious awe of her very benefits came back to him more strongly than ever. But her help at the moment was necessary to his very hope to escape all future need of her, and, though with a vague foreboding of unconjecturable evil, he stepped into the room, and the door closed on both.

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

"The course of true love never does run smooth!" May it not be because where there are no obstacles, there are no tests to the truth of Love? Where the course is smooth, the stream is crowded with pleasure-boats. Where the wave swells, and the shoals threaten, and the sky lowers, the pleasure-boats have gone back into harbour. Ships fitted for rough weather are those built and stored for long voyage.

I PASS over the joyous meeting between Waife and Sophy. I pass over George's account to his fair cousin of the scene he and Hartopp had witnessed, in which Waife's innocence had been manifested, and his reasons for accepting the penalties of guilt had been explained. The first few agitated days following Waife's return have rolled away. He is resettled in the cottage from which he had fled; he refuses, as before, to take up his abode at Lady Montfort's house. But Sophy has been almost constantly his companion, and Lady Montfort herself has spent hours with him each day—sometimes in his rustic parlour, sometimes in the small garden-plot round his cottage, to which his rambles are confined. George has gone back to his home and duties at Humberston, promising very soon to revisit his old friend, and discuss future plans.

The scholar, though with a sharp pang, conceding to Waife that all attempt publicly to clear his good name at the cost of reversing the sacrifice he had made, must be forborne, could not, however, be induced to pledge himself to unconditional silence. George felt that there were at least some others to whom the knowledge of Waife's innocence was imperatively due.

Waife is seated by his open window. It is noon; there is sunshine in the pale blue skies—an unusual softness in the wintry air. His Bible lies on the table beside him. He has just set his mark in the page, and reverently closed the book. He is alone. Lady Montfort—who, since her return from Fawley, has been suffering from a kind of hectic fever, accompanied by a langour that made even the walk to Waife's cottage a fatigue, which the sweetness of

her kindly nature enabled her to overcome, and would not permit her to confess—has been so much worse that morning as to be unable to leave her room. Sophy has gone to see her. Waife is now leaning his face upon his hand, and that face is sadder and more disquieted than it had been, perhaps, in all his wanderings. His darling Sophy is evidently unhappy. Her sorrow had not been visible during the first two or three days of his return, chased away by the joy of seeing him—the excitement of tender reproach and question—of tears that seemed as joyous as the silvery laugh which responded to the gaiety that sported round the depth of feeling, with which he himself beheld her once more clinging to his side, or seated, with upward loving eyes, on the footstool by his knees. Even at the first look, however, he had found her altered; her cheek was thinner, her colour paled. That might be from fretting for him. She would be herself again, now that her tender anxiety was relieved. But she did not become herself again. The arch and playful Sophy he had left was gone, as if never to return. He marked that her step, once so bounding, had become slow and spiritless. Often when she sate near him, seemingly reading or at her work, he noticed that her eyes were not on the page—that the work stopped abruptly in listless hands; and then he would hear her sigh—a heavy but short impatient sigh! No mistaking that sigh by those who have studied grief: Whether in maid or man, in young or old, in the gentle Sophy, so new to life, or in the haughty Darrell, weary of the world, and shrinking from its honours, that sigh had the same character, a like symptom of a malady in common; the same effort to free the heart from an oppressive load; the same token of a sharp and rankling remembrance lodged deep in that finest nerve-work of being, which no anodyne can reach—a pain that comes without apparent cause, and is sought to be expelled without conscious effort.

The old man feared at first that she might, by some means or other, in his absence, have become apprised of the brand on his own name, the verdict that had blackened his repute, the sentence that had hurled him from his native sphere; or that, as her reason had insensibly matured, she herself, reflecting on all the mystery that surrounded him—his incognitos, his hidings, the incongruity between his social grade and his education or bear-

ing, and his repeated acknowledgments that there were charges against him which compelled him to concealment, and from which he could not be cleared on earth; that she, reflecting on all these evidences to his disfavour, had either secretly admitted into her breast a conviction of his guilt, or that, as she grew up to woman, she had felt, through him, the disgrace entailed upon herself. Or if such were not the cause of her sadness, had she learned more of her father's evil courses; had any emissary of Jasper's worked upon her sensibilities or her fears? No, that could not be the case, since whatever the grounds upon which Jasper had conjectured that Sophy was with Lady Montfort, the accuracy of his conjectures had evidently been doubted by Jasper himself; or why so earnestly have questioned Waife? Had she learned that she was the grandchild and natural heiress of a man wealthy and renowned—a chief amongst the chiefs of England—who rejected her with disdain? Was she pining for her true position? or mortified by the contempt of a kinsman, whose rank so contrasted the vagrancy of the grandsire by whom alone she was acknowledged?

Tormented by these doubts, he was unable to solve them by such guarded and delicate questions as he addressed to Sophy herself. For she, when he falteringly asked what ailed his darling, would start, brighten up for the moment, answer—"Nothing, now that he had come back;" kiss his forehead, play with Sir Isaac, and then manage furtively to glide away.

But the day before that in which we now see him alone, he had asked her abruptly, "If, during his abence, any one besides George Morley had visited at Lady Montfort's—any one whom she had seen?" And Sophy's cheek had as suddenly become crimson, then deadly pale; and first she said "no," and then "yes;" and after a pause, looking away from him, she added—"The young gentleman who—who helped us to buy Sir Isaac, he has visited Lady Montfort—related to some dear friend of hers."

"What, the painter!"

"No—the other, with the dark eyes."

"Haughton!" said Waife, with an expression of great pain in his face.

"Yes—Mr. Haughton; but he has not been here a long, long time. He will not come again, I believe."

Her voice quivered, despite herself, at the last words, and she began to bustle about the room—filled Waife's pipe, thrust it into his hands with a laugh, the false mirth of which went to his very heart, and then stepped from the open window into the little garden, and began to sing one of Waife's favourite simple old Border songs; but before she got through the first line, the song ceased, and she was as lost to sight as a ringdove, whose note comes and goes so quickly amongst the impenetrable coverts.

But Waife had heard enough to justify profound alarm for Sophy's peace of mind, and to waken in his own heart some of its most painful associations. The reader, who knows the wrong inflicted on William Losely by Lionel Haughton's father—a wrong which had led to all poor Willy's subsequent misfortunes—may conceive that the very name of Haughton was wounding to his ear; and when, in his brief, sole and bitter interview with Darrell, the latter had dropped out that Lionel Haughton, however distant of kin, would be a more grateful heir than the grandchild of a convicted felon—if Willy's sweet nature *could* have admitted a momentary hate—it would have been for the thus vaunted son of the man who had stripped him of the modest all which would perhaps have saved his own child from the robber's guilt, and himself from the robber's doom. Long since, therefore, the reader will have comprehended why, when Waife came to meet Sophy at the river-side, and learned at the inn on its margin that the name of her younger companion was Lionel Haughton—why, I say, he had so morosely parted from the boy, and so imperiously bade Sophy dismiss all thought of meeting "the pretty young gentleman" again.

And now again this very Lionel Haughton to have stolen into the retreat in which poor Waife had deemed he left his treasure so secure! Was it for this he had fled from her? Did he return to find her youth blighted, her affections robbed from him, by the son of Charles Haughton? The father had despoiled his manhood of independence; must it be the son who despoiled his age of its only solace? Grant even that Lionel was worthy of Sophy—grant that she had been loyally wooed—must not that attachment be fruitless—be fatal? If Lionel were really now adopted by Darrell, Waife knew human nature too well to believe that Darrell would complacently hear Lionel ask a wife in her

whose claim to his lineage had so galled and incensed him. It was while plunged in these torturing reflections that Lady Montfort (not many minutes after Sophy's song had ceased and her form vanished) had come to visit him, and he at once accosted her with agitated inquiries—"When had Mr. Haughton first presented himself?—how often had he seen Sophy?—what had passed between them?—did not Lady Montfort see that his darling's heart was breaking?"

But he stopped as suddenly as he had rushed into this thorny maze of questions; for, looking imploringly into Caroline Montfort's face, he saw there more settled signs of a breaking heart than Sophy had yet betrayed, despite her paleness and her sighs. Sad, indeed, the change in her countenance since he had left the place months ago, though Waife, absorbed in Sophy, had not much remarked it till now, when seeking to read therein secrets that concerned his darling's welfare. Lady Montfort's beauty was so perfect in that rare harmony of feature which poets, before Byron, have compared to music, that sorrow could no more mar the effect of that beauty on the eye, than pathos can mar the effect of the music that admits it on the ear. But the change in her face seemed that of a sorrow which has lost all earthly hope. Waife, therefore, checked questions that took the tone of reproaches, and involuntarily murmured "Pardon."

Then Caroline Montfort told him all the tender projects she had conceived for his grandchild's happiness—how, finding Lionel so disinterested and noble, she had imagined she saw in him the providential agent to place Sophy in the position to which Waife had desired to raise her; Lionel to share with her the heritage of which he might otherwise despoil her—both to become the united source of joy and of pride to the childless man who now favoured the one to exclude the other. Nor in these schemes had the absent wanderer been forgotten. No; could Sophy's virtues once be recognised by Darrell, and her alleged birth acknowledged by him—could the guardian who, in fostering those virtues to bloom by Darrell's hearth, had laid under the deepest obligations one who, if unforgiving to treachery, was grateful for the humblest service—could that guardian justify the belief in his innocence which George Morley had ever entertained, and, as it now proved,

with reason—then where on all earth a man like Guy Darrell to vindicate William Losely's attainted honour, or from whom William Losely might accept cherishing friendship and independent ease, with so indisputable a right to both! Such had been the picture that the fond and sanguine imagination of Caroline Montfort had drawn from generous hope, and coloured with tender fancies. But alas for such castles in the air! All had failed. She had only herself to blame. Instead of securing Sophy's welfare, she had endangered Sophy's happiness. They whom she had desired to unite were irrevocably separated. Bitterly she accused herself—her error in relying so much on Lionel's influence with Darrell—on her own early remembrance of Darrell's affectionate nature, and singular sympathies with the young—and thus suffering Lionel and Sophy to grow familiar with each other's winning characters, and carry on childlike romance into maturer sentiment. She spoke, though briefly, of her visit to Darrell, and its ill success—of the few letters that had passed since then between herself and Lionel, in which it was settled that he should seek no parting interview with Sophy. He had declared to Sophy no formal suit—they had exchanged no lover's vows. It would be, therefore, but a dishonourable cruelty to her to say, "I come to tell you that I love you, and that we must part for ever." And how avow the reason—that reason that would humble her to the dust? Lionel was forbidden to wed with one whom Jasper Losely called daughter, and whom the guardian she so venerated believed to be his grandchild. All of comfort that Lady Montfort could suggest was, that Sophy was so young that she would conquer what might be but a girl's romantic sentiment—or, if a more serious attachment, one that no troth had cemented—for a person she might not see again for years; Lionel was negotiating exchange into a regiment on active service. "Meanwhile," said Lady Montfort, "I shall never wed again. I shall make it known that I look on your Sophy as the child of my adoption. If I do not live to save sufficient for her out of an income that is more than thrice what I require, I have instructed my lawyers to insure my life for her provision; it will be ample. Many a wooer, captivating as Lionel, and free from the scruples that fetter his choice, will be proud to kneel at the feet of one so lovely. This rank of mine, which has never yet

bestowed on me a joy, now becomes of value, since it will give dignity to—to Matilda's child, and—and to—"

Lady Montfort sobbed.

Waife listened respectfully, and for the time was comforted. Certainly, in his own heart he was glad that Lionel Haughton was permanently separated from Sophy. There was scarcely a man on earth, of fair station and repute, to whom he would have surrendered Sophy with so keen a pang as to Charles Haughton's son.

The poor young lovers! all the stars seemed against them! Was it not enough that Guy Darrell should be so obdurate! must the mild William Losely be also a malefic in their horoscope?

But when, that same evening, the old man more observantly than ever watched his grandchild, his comfort vanished—misgivings came over him—he felt assured that the fatal shaft had been broken in the wound, and that the heart was bleeding inly.

True; not without prophetic insight had Arabella Crane said to the pining, but resolute, quiet child, behind the scenes of Mr. Rugge's show, "How much you will love one day." All that night Waife lay awake pondering—revolving—exhausting that wondrous fertility of resource which teemed in his inventive brain. In vain!

And now—(the day after this conversation with Lady Montfort, whose illness grieves, but does not surprise him) —now, as he sits and thinks, and gazes abstractedly into that far, pale, winter sky—now, the old man is still scheming how to reconcile a human loving heart to the eternal loss of that affection which has so many perishable counterfeits, but which, when true in all its elements—complete in all its varied wealth of feeling, is never to be forgotten and never to be replaced.

CHAPTER II.

An Offering to the Manes.

THREE sides of Waife's cottage were within Lady Montfort's grounds; the fourth side, with its more public entrance, bordered the lane. Now, as he thus sate, he was startled by a low timid ring at the door which opened on

the lane. Who could it be?—not Jasper! He began to tremble. The ring was repeated. One woman-servant composed all his establishment. He heard her opening the door—heard a low voice; it seemed a soft, fresh, young voice. His room-door opened, and the woman, who of course knew the visitor by sight and name, having often remarked him on the grounds with Lady Montfort and Sophy, said, in a cheerful tone, as if bringing good news, "Mr. Lionel Haughton."

Scarcely was the door closed—scarcely the young man in the room, before, with all his delightful, passionate frankness, Lionel had clasped Waife's reluctant hand in both his own, and, with tears in his eyes, and choking in his voice, was pouring forth sentences so loosely knit together, that they seemed almost incoherent;—now a burst of congratulation—now a falter of condolence—now words that seemed to supplicate as for pardon to an offence of his own—rapid transitions from enthusiasm to pity—from joy to grief—variable, with the stormy April of a young, fresh, hearty nature.

Taken so wholly by surprise, Waife, in vain attempting to appear cold and distant, and only very vaguely comprehending what the unwelcome visitor so confusedly expressed, at last found voice to interrupt the jet and gush of Lionel's impetuous emotions, and said as drily as he could, "I am really at a loss to conceive the cause of what appears to be meant as congratulations to me and reproaches to yourself, Mr.—Mr. Haugh—;" his lips could not complete the distasteful name.

"My name shocks you—no wonder," said Lionel, deeply mortified, and bowing down his head as he gently dropped the old man's hand. "Reproaches to myself!—Ah, sir, I am here as Charles Haughton's son!"

"What!" exclaimed Waife, "you know? How could you know that Charles Haughton——"

LIONEL (interrupting).—"I know. His own lips confessed his shame to have so injured you."

WAIFE.—"Confessed to whom?"

LIONEL.—"To Alban Morley. Believe me, my father's remorse was bitter; it dies not in his grave, it lives in me. I have so longed to meet with William Losely."

Waife seated himself in silence, shading his face with one hand, while with the other he made a slight gesture, as if

to discourage or rebuke farther allusion to ancient wrong. Lionel, in quick accents, but more connected meaning, went on—

"I have just come from Mr. Darrell, where I and Colonel Morley (here Lionel's countenance was darkly troubled) have been staying some days. Two days ago I received this letter from George Morley, forwarded to me from London. It says—let me read it—'You will rejoice to learn that our dear Waife'—pardon that name."

"I have no other—go on."

"'Is once more with his grandchild.'" (Here Lionel sighed heavily—sigh like Sophy's.) "'You will rejoice yet more to learn that it has pleased Heaven to allow me and another witness, who, some years ago, had been misled into condemning Waife, to be enabled to bear incontrovertible testimony to the complete innocence of my beloved friend; nay, more—I say to you most solemnly, that in all which appeared to attest guilt, there has been a virtue, which, if known to Mr. Darrell, would make him bow in reverence to that old man. Tell Mr. Darrell so from me; and add, that in saying it, I express my conviction of his own admiring sympathy for all that is noble and heroic.'"

"Too much—this is too, too much," stammered out Waife, restlessly turning away; "but—but, you are folding up the letter. That is all?—he does not say more?—he does not mention any one else?—eh?—eh?"

"No, sir; that is all."

"Thank Heaven! He is an honourable man! Yet he has said more than he ought—much more than he can prove, or than I"—He broke off, and abruptly asked, "How did Mr. Darrell take these assertions? With an incredulous laugh—eh?—'Why, the old rogue had pleaded guilty!'"

"Sir, Alban Morley was there to speak of the William Losely whom he had known; to explain, from facts which he had collected at the time, of what nature was the evidence *not* brought forward. The motive that induced you to plead guilty I had long guessed; it flashed in an instant on Guy Darrell; it was not mere guess with him! You ask me what he said? This: 'Grand nature! George is right! and I do bow my head in reverence!'"

"He said *that*?—Guy Darrell? On your honour, he said that?"

"Can you doubt it? Is he not a gentleman?"

Waife was fairly overcome.

"But, sir," resumed Lionel, "I must not conceal from you, that, though George's letter and Alban Morley's communications sufficed to satisfy Darrell, without further question, your old friend was naturally anxious to learn a more full account, in the hope of legally substantiating your innocence. He therefore despatched by the telegraph a request to his nephew to come at once to Fawley. George arrived there yesterday. Do not blame him, sir, that we share his secret."

"You do? Good heavens! And that lawyer will be barbarous enough too; but no—he has an interest in not accusing of midnight robbery his daughter's husband; Jasper's secret is safe with him. And Colonel Morley—surely his cruel nephew will not suffer him to make me—me, with one foot in the grave—a witness against my Lizzy's son!"

"Colonel Morley, at Darrell's suggestion, came with me to London; and if he does not accompany me to you, it is because he is even now busied in finding out your son, not to undo, but to complete the purpose of your self-sacrifice. 'All other considerations,' said Guy Darrell, 'must be merged in this one thought—that such a father shall not have been in vain a martyr.' Colonel Morley is empowered to treat with your son on any terms; but on this condition, that the rest of his life shall inflict no farther pain, no farther fear on you. This is the sole use to which, without your consent, we have presumed to put the secret we have learned. Do you pardon George now?"

Waife's lips murmured inaudibly, but his face grew very bright; and as it was raised upwards, Lionel's ear caught the whisper of a name—it was not Jasper, it was "Lizzy."

"Ah! why," said Lionel, sadly, and after a short pause, "why was I not permitted to be the one to attest your innocence—to clear your name? I, who owed to you so vast an hereditary debt! And now—dear, dear Mr. Losely——"

"Hush! Waife!—call me Waife still!—and always."

"Willingly! It is the name by which I have accustomed myself to love you. Now, listen to me. I am dishonoured until at least the mere pecuniary debt, due to you from my father, is paid. Hist! hist!—Alban Morley says

so—Darrell says so. Darrell says, 'he cannot own me as kinsman till that debt is cancelled.' Darrell lends me the means to do it; he would share his kinsman's ignominy if he did not. Before I could venture even to come hither, the sum due to you from my father was repaid. I hastened to town yesterday evening—saw Mr. Darrell's lawyer. I have taken a great liberty—I have invested this sum already in the purchase of an annuity for you. Mr. Darrell's lawyer had a client who was in immediate want of the sum due to you; and, not wishing permanently to burthen his estate by mortgage, would give a larger interest by way of annuity than the public offices would; excellent landed security. The lawyer said it would be a pity to let the opportunity slip, so I ventured to act for you. It was all settled this morning. The particulars are on this paper, which I will leave with you. Of course the sum due to you is not exactly the same as that which my father borrowed before I was born. There is the interest—compound interest; nothing more. I don't understand such matters; Darrell's lawyer made the calculation—it must be right."

Waife had taken the paper, glanced at its contents, dropped it in confusion, amaze. Those hundreds lent, swelled into all those thousands returned! And all methodically computed—tersely—arithmetically—down to fractions. So that every farthing seemed, and indeed was, his lawful due. And that sum invested in an annuity of £500 a-year—income which, to poor Gentleman Waife, seemed a prince's revenue!

"It is quite a business-like computation, I tell you, sir; all done by a lawyer. It is indeed," cried Lionel, dismayed at Waife's look and gesture. "Compound interest *will* run up to what seems a large amount at first; every child knows that. You can't deny Cocker and calculating tables, and that sort of thing. William Losely, you cannot leave an eternal load of disgrace on the head of Charles Haughton's son."

"Poor Charlie Haughton," murmured Waife. "And I was feeling bitter against his memory—bitter against his son. How Heaven loves to teach us the injustice that dwells in anger! But—but—this cannot be. I thank Mr. Darrell humbly—I cannot take his money."

"It is not his money—it is mine; he only advances it to me. It costs him really nothing, for he deducts the

£500 a-year from the allowance he makes me. And I don't want such an absurd allowance as I had before going out of the Guards into the line—I mean to be a soldier in good earnest. Too much pocket-money spoils a soldier—only gets one into scrapes. Alban Morley says the same. Darrell, too, says 'Right; no gold could buy a luxury like the payment of a father's debt!' You cannot grudge me that luxury—you dare not!—why? because you are an honest man."

"Softly, softly, softly," said Waife. "Let me look at you. Don't talk of money now—don't let us think of money! What a look of your father! 'Tis he, 'tis he whom I see before me! Charlie's sweet bright playful eyes—that might have turned aside from the path of duty—a sheriff's officer! Ah! and Charlie's happy laugh, too, at the slightest joke! But *this* is not Charlie's—it is all your own (touching, with gentle finger, Lionel's broad truthful brow). Poor Charlie, he *was* grieved—you are right—I remember."

"Sir," said Lionel, who was now on one knee by Waife's chair—"sir, I have never yet asked man for his blessing—not even Guy Darrell. Will you put your hand on my head? and oh! that in the mystic world beyond us, some angel may tell Charles Haughton that William Losely has blessed his son!"

Solemnly, but with profound humility—one hand on the Bible beside him, one on the young soldier's bended head—William Losely blessed Charles Haughton's son—and, having done so, involuntarily his arms opened, and blessing was followed by embrace.

CHAPTER III.

Nothing so obstinate as a young man's hope; nothing so eloquent as a lover's tongue.

HITHERTO there had been no reference to Sophy. Not Sophy's lover, but Charles Haughton's son had knelt to Waife and received the old man's blessing. But Waife could not be long forgetful of his darling—nor his anxiety on her account. The expression in his varying face changed suddenly. Not half-an-hour before, Lionel Haughton was the last man in the world to whom willingly he would have

consigned his grandchild. Now, of all men in the world Lionel Haughton would have been his choice. He sighed heavily; he comprehended, by his own changed feelings, how tender and profound an affection Lionel Haughton might inspire in a heart so fresh as Sophy's, and so tenacious of the impressions it received. But they were separated for ever; she ought not even again to see him. Uneasily Waife glanced towards the open window—rose involuntarily, closed it, and drew down the blind.

"You must go now, young gentleman," said he, almost churlishly.

The quick lover's sense in Lionel divined why the blind was drawn, and the dismissal so abruptly given.

"Give me your address," said Waife; "I will write about —that paper. Don't now stay longer—pray—pray."

"Do not fear, sir. I am not lingering here with the wish to see—*her!*"

Waife looked down.

"Before I asked the servant to announce me, I took the precaution to learn that you were alone. But a few words more—hear them patiently. Have you any proof that could satisfy Mr. Darrell's reason that your Sophy is his daughter's child?"

"I have Jasper's assurance that she is; and the copy of the nurse's attestation to the same effect. They satisfied me. I would not have asked Mr. Darrell to be as easily contented; I could but have asked him to inquire, and satisfy himself. But he would not even hear me."

"He will hear you now, and with respect."

"He will!" cried Waife, joyously. "And if he should inquire, and if Sophy should prove to be, as I have ever believed, his daughter's child, would he not own, and receive, and cherish her?"

"Alas, sir, do not let me pain you; but that is not my hope. If, indeed, it should prove that your son deceived you—that Sophy is in no way related to him—if she should be the child of peasants, but of honest peasants—why, sir, *that* is my hope, my last hope—for then I would kneel once more at your feet, and implore your permission to win her affection and ask her hand."

"What! Mr. Darrell would consent to your union with the child of peasants, and not with his own grandchild?"

"Sir, sir, you rack me to the heart; but if you knew all, you would not wonder to hear me say, 'I dare not ask Mr. Darrell to bless my union with the daughter of Jasper Losely.'"

Waife suppressed a groan, and began to pace the room with disordered steps.

"But," resumed Lionel, "go to Fawley yourself. Seek Darrell; compare the reasons for your belief with his for rejecting it. At this moment his pride is more subdued than I have ever known it. He will go calmly into the investigation of facts; the truth will become clear. Sir—dear, dear sir—I am not without a hope."

"A hope that the child I have so cherished should be nothing in the world to me!"

"Nothing to you! Is memory such a shadow?—is affection such a weathercock? Has the love between you and Sophy been only the instinct of kindred blood? Has it not been hallowed by all that makes Age and Childhood so pure a blessing to each other, rooted in trials borne together? Were you not the first who taught her in wanderings, in privations, to see a Mother in Nature, and pray to a Father which is in Heaven? Would all this be blotted out of your soul, if she were not the child of that son whom it chills you to remember? Sir, if there be no tie to replace the mere bond of kindred, why have you taken such vigilant pains to separate a child from him whom you believe to be her father?"

Waife stood motionless and voiceless. This passionate appeal struck him forcibly.

"And, sir," added Lionel, in a lower, sadder tone—"can I ask you, whose later life has been one sublime self-sacrifice, whether you would rather that you might call Sophy grandchild, and know her wretched, than know her but as the infant angel whom Heaven sent to your side when bereaved and desolate, and know also that she was happy? Oh, William Losely, pray with me that Sophy may not be your grandchild. Her home will not be less your home—her attachment will not less replace to you your lost son—and on your knee her children may learn to lisp the same prayers that you taught to her. Go to Darrell—go—go! and take me with you!"

"I will—I will," exclaimed Waife; and snatching at his hat and staff—"Come—come! But Sophy should not

learn that you have been here—that I have gone away with you; it might set her thinking, dreaming, hoping—all to end in greater sorrow." He bustled out of the room to caution the old woman, and to write a few hasty lines to Sophy herself—assuring her, on his most solemn honour, that he was not now flying from her to resume his vagrant life—that, without fail, please Heaven, he would return that night or the next day.

In a few minutes he reopened the room door, beckoning silently to Lionel, and then stole into the quiet lane with quick steps.

CHAPTER IV.

Guy Darrell's views in the invitation to Waife.

LIONEL had but inadequately represented, for he could but imperfectly comprehend, the profound impression made upon Guy Darrell by George Morley's disclosures. Himself so capable of self-sacrifice, Darrell was the man above all others to regard with an admiring reverence, which partook of awe, a self-immolation that seemed almost above humanity — to him who set so lofty an estimate on good name and fair repute. He had not only willingly permitted, but even urged Lionel to repair to Waife, and persuade the old man to come to Fawley. With Waife he was prepared to enter into the full discussion of Sophy's alleged parentage. But apart even from considerations that touched a cause of perplexity which disquieted himself, Darrell was eager to see and to show homage to the sufferer, in whom he recognised a hero's dignity. And if he had sent by Lionel no letter from himself to Waife, it was only because, in the exquisite delicacy of feeling that belonged to him, when his best emotions were aroused, he felt it just that the whole merit, and the whole delight of reparation to the wrongs of William Losely should, without direct interposition of his own, be left exclusively to Charles Haughton's son. Thus far it will be acknowledged that Guy Darrell was not one of those men who, once warmed to magnanimous impulse, are cooled by a thrifty prudence when action grows out of the impulse. Guy Darrell could not be generous by drachm and scruple. Not apt to say, "I apologise,"—

slow to say, "I repent;" very—very—very slow indeed to say, "I forgive;" yet let him once say, "I repent," "I apologise," or "I forgive," and it was said with his whole heart and soul.

But it must not be supposed that, in authorising Lionel to undertake the embassy to Waife, or in the anticipation of what might pass between Waife and himself should the former consent to revisit the old house from which he had been so scornfully driven, Darrell had altered, or dreamed of altering, one iota of his resolves against an union between Lionel and Sophy. True, Lionel had induced him to say, "Could it be indisputably proved that no drop of Jasper Losely's blood were in this girl's veins—that she were the lawful child of honest parents, however humble—my right to stand between her and yourself would cease." But a lawyer's experience is less credulous than a lover's hope. And to Darrell's judgment it was wholly improbable that any honest parents, however humble, should have yielded their child to a knave like Jasper, while it was so probable that his own persuasion was well founded, and that she was Jasper's daughter, though not Matilda's.

The winter evening had closed, George and Darrell were conversing in the library; the theme, of course, was Waife; and Darrell listened with vivid interest to George's graphic accounts of the old man's gentle playful humour—with its vague desultory under-currents of poetic fancy or subtle wisdom. But when George turned to speak of Sophy's endearing, lovely nature, and, though cautiously, to intimate an appeal on her behalf to Darrell's sense of duty, or susceptibility to kindly emotions, the proud man's brow became knit, and his stately air evinced displeasure. Fortunately, just at a moment when farther words might have led to a permanent coldness between men so disposed to esteem each other, they heard the sound of wheels on the frosty ground—the shrill bell at the porch-door.

CHAPTER V.

The vagabond received in the manor-house at Fawley.

VERY lamely, very feebly, declining Lionel's arm, but leaning heavily on his crutch-stick, Waife crossed the threshold of the manor-house. George sprang forward to

welcome him. The old man looked on the preacher's face with a kind of wandering uncertainty in his eye, and George saw that his cheek was very much flushed. He limped on through the hall, still leaning on his staff, George and Lionel at either side. A pace or two, and there stood Darrell! Did he, the host, not spring forward to offer an arm, to extend a hand? No; such greeting in Darrell would have been but vulgar courtesy. As the old man's eye rested on him, the superb gentleman bowed low —as we bow to kings!

They entered the library. Darrell made a sign to George and Lionel. They understood the sign, and left visitor and host alone.

Lionel drew George into the quaint old dining-hall. "I am very uneasy about our dear friend," he said, in agitated accents. "I fear that I have had too little consideration for his years and his sensitive nature, and that, what with the excitement of the conversation that passed between us, and the fatigue of the journey, his nerves have broken down. We were not half-way on the road, and as we had the railway-carriage to ourselves, I was talking to him with imprudent earnestness, when he began to tremble all over, and went into an hysterical paroxysm of mingled tears and laughter. I wished to stop at the next station, but he was not long recovering, and insisted on coming on. Still, as we approached Fawley, after muttering to himself, as far as I could catch his words, incoherently, he sank into a heavy state of lethargy or stupor, resting his head on my shoulder. It was with difficulty I roused him when he entered the park."

"Poor old man," said George feelingly; "no doubt the quick succession of emotions through which he has lately passed has overcome him for the time. But the worst is now past. His interview with Darrell must cheer his heart and soothe his spirits; and that interview over, we must give him all repose and nursing. But tell me what passed between you—if he was very indignant that I could not suffer men like you and my uncle Alban and Guy Darrell, to believe him a picklock and a thief."

Lionel began his narrative, but had not proceeded far in it before Darrel's voice was heard shouting loud, and the library bell rang violently.

They hurried into the library, and Lionel's fears were

verified. Waife was in strong convulsions; and as these gradually ceased, and he rested without struggle, half on the floor, half in Darrell's arms, he was evidently unconscious of all around him. His eye was open, but fixed in a glassy stare. The servants thronged into the room; one was despatched instantly to summon the nearest medical practitioner. "Help me—George—Lionel," said Darrell, "to bear him up-stairs. Mills, light us." When they reached the landing-place, Mills asked, "Which room, sir?"

Darrell hesitated an instant, then his grey eye lit into his dark fire. "My father's room—he shall rest on my father's bed."

When the surgeon arrived, he declared Waife to be in imminent danger—pressure on the brain. He prescribed prompt and vigorous remedies, which had indeed before the surgeon's arrival suggested themselves to, and been partly commenced by, Darrell, who had gone through too many varieties of experience to be unversed in the rudiments of leechcraft. "If I were in my guest's state," asked Darrell of the practitioner, "what would you do?"

"Telegraph instantly for Dr. F——."

"Lionel—you hear? Take my own horse—he will carry you like the wind. Off to * * * *; it is the nearest telegraph station."

Darrell did not stir from Waife's bedside all that anxious night. Dr. F—— arrived at morning. He approved of all that had been done, but nevertheless altered the treatment; and after staying some hours, said to Darrell, "I am compelled to leave you for the present, nor could I be of use in staying. I have given all the aid in my power to Nature—we must leave the rest to Nature herself. That fever—those fierce throes and spasms—are but Nature's efforts to cast off the grasp of the enemy we do not see. It now depends on what degree of rallying power be left to the patient. Fortunately his frame is robust, yet not plethoric. Do you know his habits?"

"I know," answered George,—"most temperate, most innocent."

"Then, with constant care, minute attention to my directions, he may recover."

"If care and attention can save my guest's life, he shall not die," said Darrell.

The physician looked at the speaker's pale face and compressed lips. "But, Mr. Darrell, I must not have you on my hands too. You must not be out of your bed again to-night."

"Certainly not," said George. "I shall watch alone."

"No," cried Lionel, "that is my post too."

"Pooh!" said Darrell; "young men so far from Death, are not such watchful sentinels against his stroke as men of my years, who have seen him in all aspects; and, moreover, base indeed is the host who deserts his own guest's sick-chamber. Fear not for me, doctor; no man needs sleep less than I do."

Dr. F—— slid his hand on Darrell's pulse. "Irregular—quick; but what vitality! what power!—a young man's pulse. Mr. Darrell, many years for your country's service are yet in these lusty beats."

Darrell breathed his chronic sigh, and turning back to Waife's bedside, said to the doctor, "When will you come again?"

"The day after to-morrow."

When the doctor returned, Waife was out of immediate danger. Nature, fortified by the "temperate, innocent habits" which husband up her powers, had dislodged, at least for a time, her enemy; but the attack was followed by extreme debility. It was clear that for days, perhaps even weeks to come, the vagrant must remain a prisoner under Darrell's roof-tree.

Lionel had been too mindful of Sophy's anxiety to neglect writing to Lady Montfort the day after Waife's seizure. But he could not find the heart to state the old man's danger; and with the sanguine tendencies of his young nature, even when at the worst he clung to belief in the best. He refrained from any separate and private communication of Waife's state to Lady Montfort, lest the sadness it would not fail to occasion her should be perceptible to Sophy, and lead her to divine the cause. So he contented himself with saying that Waife had accompanied him to Mr. Darrell's, and would be detained there, treated with all kindness and honour for some days.

Sophy's mind was relieved by this intelligence, but it filled her with wonder and conjecture. That Waife, who had so pertinaciously refused to break bread as a guest under any man's roof-tree, should be for days receiving

the hospitality of Lionel Haughton's wealthy and powerful kinsman, was indeed mysterious. But whatever brought Waife and Lionel thus in confidential intercourse, could not but renew yet more vividly the hopes she had been endeavouring of late to stifle. And combining together many desultory remembrances of words escaped unawares from Lionel, from Lady Montfort, from Waife himself, the truth (of which her native acuteness had before admitted glimpses) grew almost clear to her. Was not Mr. Darrell that relation to her lost mother upon whom she had claims not hitherto conceded? Lionel and Waife both with that relation now! Surely the clouds that had rested on her future were admitting the sun through their opening rents—and she blushed as she caught its ray.

CHAPTER VI.

Individual concessions are like political; when you once begin, there is no saying where you will stop.

WAIFE's first words on recovering consciousness were given to thoughts of Sophy. He had promised her to return, at farthest, the next day; she would be so uneasy—he must get up—he must go at once. When he found his strength would not suffer him to rise, he shed tears. It was only very gradually and at intervals that he became acquainted with the length and severity of his attack, or fully sensible that he was in Darrell's house; that that form, of which he had retained vague dreamy reminiscences, hanging over his pillow, wiping his brow, and soothing him with the sweetest tones of the sweet human voice—that that form, so genial, so brotherlike, was the man who had once commanded him not to sully with his presence a stainless home.

All that had passed within the last few days was finally made clear to him in a short, unwitnessed, touching conversation with his host; after which, however, he became gradually worse; his mind remaining clear, but extremely dejected; his bodily strength evidently sinking. Dr. F—— was again summoned in haste. That great physician was, as every great physician should be, a profound philosopher, though with a familiar ease of manner, and a light offhand vein of talk, which made the philosophy less sensible

to the taste than any other ingredient in his pharmacopœia. Turning everybody else out of the room, he examined his patient alone—sounded the old man's vital organs, with ear and with stethoscope—talked to him now on his feelings, now on the news of the day, and then stepped out to Darrell.

"Something on the heart, my dear sir; I can't get at it; perhaps you can. Take off that something, and the springs will react, and my patient will soon recover. All about him sound as a rock—but the heart; that has been horribly worried; something worries it now. His heart may be seen in his eye. Watch his eye; it is missing some face it is accustomed to see."

Darrell changed colour. He stole back into Waife's room, and took the old man's hand. Waife returned the pressure, and said, "I was just praying for you—and—and —I am sinking fast. Do not let me die, sir, without wishing poor Sophy a last good-by!"

Darrell passed back to the landing-place, where George and Lionel were standing, while Dr. F—— was snatching a hasty refreshment in the library before his return to town. Darrell laid his hand on Lionel's shoulder. "Lionel, you must go back to London with Dr. F——. I cannot keep you here longer. I want your room."

"Sir," said Lionel, aghast, "while Waife is still so ill! You cannot be thus unkind.

"Inconsiderate egotist! would you deprive the old man of a presence dearer to him than yours? George, you will go too, but *you* will return. You told me, yesterday, that your wife was in London for a few days; entreat her to accompany you hither; entreat her to bring with her the poor young lady whom my guest pines to see at his bedside—*the face that his eye misses.*"

CHAPTER VII.

Sophy, Darrell, and the Flute-player. Darrell prepares a surprise for Waife.

SOPHY is come. She has crossed that inexorable threshold. She is a guest in the house which rejects her as a daughter. She has been there some days. Waife revived at the first sight of her tender face. He has left his bed;

can move for some hours a-day into an adjoining chamber, which has been hastily arranged for his private sitting-room; and can walk its floors with a step that grows daily firmer in the delight of leaning on Sophy's arm.

Since the girl's arrival, Darrell has relaxed his watch over the patient. He never now enters his guest's apartment without previous notice; and, by that incommunicable instinct which passes in households between one silent breast and another, as by a law equally strong to attract or repel—here drawing together, there keeping apart—though no rule in either case has been laid down; —by virtue, I say, of that strange intelligence, Sophy is not in the old man's room when Darrell enters. Rarely in the twenty-four hours do the host and the fair young guest encounter. But Darrell is a quick and keen observer. He has seen enough of Sophy to be sensible of her charms—to penetrate into her simple natural loveliness of character—to feel a deep interest in her, and a still deeper pity for Lionel. Secluding himself as much as possible in his private room, or in his leafless woods, his reveries increase in gloom. Nothing unbends his moody brow like Fairthorn's flute or Fairthorn's familiar converse.

It has been said before that Fairthorn knew his secrets. Fairthorn had idolised Caroline Lyndsay. Fairthorn was the only being in the world to whom Guy Darrell could speak of Caroline Lyndsay—to whom he could own the unconquerable but unforgiving love which had twice driven him from the social world. Even to Fairthorn, of course, all could not be told. Darrell could not speak of the letter he had received at Malta, nor of Caroline's visit to him at Fawley; for to do so, even to Fairthorn, was like a treason to the *dignity* of the Beloved. And Guy Darrell might rail at her inconstancy—her heartlessness; but to boast that she had lowered herself by the proffers that were dictated by repentance, Guy Darrell could not do *that;*—he was a gentleman. Still there was much left to say. He could own that he thought she would now accept his hand; and when Fairthorn looked happy at that thought, and hinted at excuses for her former fickleness, it was a great relief to Darrell to fly into a rage; but if the flute-player meanly turned round and became himself Caroline's accuser, then poor Fairthorn was indeed frightened; for Darrell's trembling lip or melancholy manner overwhelmed

the assailant with self-reproach, and sent him sidelong into one of his hidden coverts.

But at this moment Fairthorn was a support to him under other trials—Fairthorn, who respects as he does, as no one else ever can, the sanctity of the Darrell line—who would shrink like himself from the thought that the daughter of Jasper Losely, and in all probability not a daughter of Matilda Darrell, should ever be mistress of that ancestral hall, lowly and obscure and mouldering though it be—and that the child of a sharper, a thief, a midnight assassin, should carry on the lineage of knights and warriors in whose stainless scutcheons, on many a Gothic tomb or over the portals of ruined castles, was impaled the heraldry of Brides sprung from the loins of Lion Kings! Darrell, then, doing full justice to all Sophy's beauty and grace, purity and goodness, was more and more tortured by the conviction that she could never be wife to the man on whom, for want of all nearer kindred, would devolve the heritage of the Darrell name.

On the other hand, Sophy's feelings towards her host were almost equally painful and embittered. The tenderness and reverence that he had showed to her beloved grandfather, the affecting gratitude with which Waife spoke of him, necessarily deepened her prepossessions in his favour as Lionel's kinsman; and though she saw him so sparingly, still, when they did meet, she had no right to complain of his manner. It might be distant, taciturn; but it was gentle, courteous—the manner which might be expected, in a host of secluded habits, to a young guest from whose sympathies he was removed by years, but to whose comforts he was unobtrusively considerate—whose wishes were delicately forestalled. Yet was this all that her imagination had dared to picture on entering those grey walls? Where was the evidence of the relationship of which she had dreamed?—where a single sign that she was more in that house than a mere guest?—where, alas! a token that even Lionel had named her to his kinsman, and that for Lionel's sake that kinsman bade her welcome? And Lionel too—gone the very day before she arrived! *That* she learned incidentally from the servant who showed her into her room. Gone, and not addressed a line to herself, though but to condole with her on her grandfather's illness, or congratulate her that the illness had spared the

life! She felt wounded to the very core. As Waife's progressive restoration allowed her thoughts more to revert to so many causes for pain and perplexity, the mystery of all connected with her own and Waife's sojourn under that roof baffled her attempts at conjecture. The old man did not volunteer explanations. Timidly she questioned him; but his nerves yet were so unstrung, and her questions so evidently harassed him, that she only once made that attempt to satisfy her own bewilderment, and smiled as if contented when he said, after a long pause, "Patience yet, my child; let me get a little stronger. You see Mr. Darrell will not suffer me to talk with him on matters that must be discussed with him before I go; and then—and then—Patience till then, Sophy."

Neither George nor his wife gave her any clue to the inquiries that preyed upon her mind. The latter, a kind, excellent woman, meekly devoted to her husband, either was, or affected to be, in ignorance of the causes that had led Waife to Fawley, save very generally that Darrell had once wronged him by an erring judgment, and had hastened to efface that wrong. And then she kissed Sophy fondly, and told her that brighter days were in store for the old man and herself. George said with more authority—the authority of the priest—"Ask no questions. Time, that solves all riddles, is hurrying on, and Heaven directs its movements."

Her very heart was shut up, except where it could gush forth—nor even then with full tide—in letters to Lady Montfort. Caroline had heard from George's wife, with intense emotion, that Sophy was summoned to Darrell's house, the gravity of Waife's illness being considerately suppressed. Lady Montfort could but suppose that Darrell's convictions had been shaken—his resolutions softened; that he sought an excuse to see Sophy, and judge of her himself. Under this impression, in parting with her young charge, Caroline besought Sophy to write to her constantly, and frankly. Sophy felt an inexpressible relief in this correspondence. But Lady Montfort in her replies was not more communicative than Waife or the Morleys; only she seemed more thoughtfully anxious that Sophy should devote herself to the task of propitiating her host's affections. She urged her to try and break through his reserve—see more of him; as if that were possible!

And her letters were more filled with questions about Darrell, than even with admonitions and soothings to Sophy. The letters that arrived at Fawley were brought in a bag, which Darrell opened; but Sophy noticed that it was with a peculiar compression of lip, and a marked change of colour, that he had noticed the handwriting on Lady Montfort's first letter to her, and that after that first time her letters were not enclosed in the bag, but came apart, and were never again given to her by her host.

Thus passed days in which Sophy's time was spent chiefly in Waife's sick-room. But now he is regaining strength hourly. To his sitting-room comes George frequently to relieve Sophy's watch. There, once a day, comes Guy Darrell, and what then passed between the two men none witnessed. In these hours Waife insisted upon Sophy's going forth for air and exercise. She is glad to steal out alone—steal down by the banks of the calm lake, or into the gloom of the mournful woods. Here she not unfrequently encounters Fairthorn, who, having taken more than ever to the flute, is driven more than ever to out-door rambles, for he has been cautioned not to indulge in his melodious resource within doors lest he disturb the patient.

Fairthorn and Sophy thus made acquaintance, distant and shy at first on both sides; but it gradually became more frank and cordial. Fairthorn had an object not altogether friendly in encouraging this intimacy. He thought, poor man, that he should be enabled to extract from Sophy some revelations of her early life, which would elucidate, not in favour of her asserted claims, the mystery that hung upon her parentage. But had Dick Fairthorn been the astutest of diplomatists, in this hope he would have been equally disappointed. Sophy had nothing to communicate. Her ingenuousness utterly baffled the poor flute-player. Out of an innocent, unconscious kind of spite, on ceasing to pry into Sophy's descent, he began to enlarge upon the dignity of Darrell's. He inflicted on her the long-winded genealogical memoir, the recital of which had, on a previous occasion, so nearly driven Lionel Haughton from Fawley. He took her to see the antiquary's grave; he spoke to her, as they stood there, of Darrell's ambitious boyhood — his arid, laborious manhood — his determination to restore the fallen line—the very vow he

had made to the father he had so pityingly revered. He sought to impress on her the consciousness that she was the guest of one who belonged to a race with whom spotless honour was the all in all; and who had gone through life with bitter sorrows, but reverencing that race, and vindicating that honour; Fairthorn's eye would tremble—his eyes flash on her while he talked. She, poor child, could not divine why; but she felt that he was angry with her —*speaking at her*. In fact, Fairthorn's prickly tongue was on the barbed point of exclaiming, "And how dare you foist yourself into this unsullied lineage—how dare you think that the dead would not turn in their graves, ere they would make room in the vault of the Darrells for the daughter of a Jasper Losely!" But though she could not conceive the musician's covert meaning in these heraldic discourses, Sophy, with a justness of discrimination that must have been intuitive, separated from the more fantastic declamations of the grotesque genealogist that which was genuine and pathetic in the single image of the last descendant in a long and gradually-falling race, lifting it up once more into power and note on toiling shoulders, and standing on the verge of age, with the melancholy consciousness that the effort was successful only for his fleeting life; that, with all his gold, with all his fame, the hope which had achieved alike the gold and the fame was a lying mockery, and that name and race would perish with himself, when the earth yawned for him beside the antiquary's grave. And these recitals made her conceive a more soft and tender interest in Guy Darrell than she had before admitted; they accounted for the mournfulness on his brow; they lessened her involuntary awe of that stateliness of bearing, which before had only chilled her as the evidence of pride.

While Fairthorn and Sophy thus matured acquaintance, Darrell and Waife were drawing closer and closer to each other. Certainly no one would be predisposed to suspect any congeniality of taste, intellect, experience, or emotion, between two men whose lives had been so widely different —in whose faults or merits the ordinary observer would have seen nothing but antagonism and contrast. Unquestionably their characters were strikingly dissimilar, yet there was that in each which the other recognised as familiar to his own nature. Each had been the victim of

his heart; each had passed over the ploughshare of self-sacrifice. Darrell had offered up his youth—Waife his age;—Darrell to a Father and the unrequiting Dead—Waife to a Son whose life had become his terror. To one man, NAME had been an idol; to the other, NAME had been a weed cast away into the mire. To the one man, unjoyous, evanescent glory—to the other, a shame that had been borne with a sportive cheerfulness, dashed into sorrow only when the world's contumely threatened to despoil Affection of its food. But there was something akin in their joint experience of earthly vanities;—so little solace in worldly honours to the triumphant Orator—so little of misery to the vagrant Mime while his conscience mutely appealed to Heaven from the verdict of his kind. And as beneath all the levity and whim of the man reared and nurtured, and fitted by his characteristic tendencies, to view life through its humours, not through its passions, there still ran a deep under-current of grave and earnest intellect and feeling—so too, amidst the severer and statelier texture of the once ambitious, laborious mind, which had conducted Darrell to renown—amidst all that gathered-up intensity of passion, which admitted no comedy into Sorrow, and saw in Love but the aspect of Fate—amidst all this lofty seriousness of soul, there was yet a vivid capacity of enjoyment—those fine sensibilities to the pleasurable sun-rays of life, which are constitutional to all GENIUS, no matter how grave its vocations. True, affliction at last may dull them, as it dulls all else that we took from Nature when she equipped us for life. Yet, in the mind of Darrell, affliction had shattered the things most gravely coveted, even more than it had marred its perceptive acknowledgment of the sympathies between fancies that move to smiles, and thoughts that bequeath solemn lessons, or melt to no idle tears. Had Darrell been placed amidst the circumstances that make happy the homes of earnest men, Darrell would have been mirthful; had Waife been placed amongst the circumstances that concentrate talent, and hedge round life with trained thicksets and belting laurels, Waife would have been grave.

It was not in the earlier conferences that took place in Waife's apartment that the subject which had led the old man to Fawley was brought into discussion. When Waife had sought to introduce it—when, after Sophy's arrival,

he had looked wistfully into Darrell's face, striving to read there the impression she had created, and, unable to discover, had begun, with tremulous accents, to reopen the cause that weighed on him—Darrell stopped him at once. "Hush — not yet; remember that it was in the very moment you first broached this sorrowful topic, on arriving here, and perceived how different the point of view from which we two must regard it, that your nerves gave way—your illness rushed on you. Wait, not only till you are stronger, but till we know each other better. This subject is one that it becomes us to treat with all the strength of our reason—with all the calm which either can impose upon the feelings that ruffle judgment. At present, talk we of all matters except that, which I promise you shall be fairly discussed at last."

Darrell found, however, that his most effective diversion from the subject connected with Sophy was through another channel in the old man's affections, hopes, and fears. George Morley, in repeating the conversation he had overheard between Waife and Jasper, had naturally, while clearing the father, somewhat softened the bravado and cynicism of the son's language, and more than somewhat brightened the touches of natural feeling by which the bravado and cynicism had been alternated. And Darrell had sufficient magnanimity to conquer the repugnance with which he approached a name associated with so many dark and hateful memories, and, avoiding as much as possible distinct reference to Jasper's past life, to court a consultation on the chances of saving from the worst the life that yet remained. With whom else, indeed, than Jasper's father could Darrell so properly and so unreservedly discuss a matter in which their interest and their fear were in common?—As though he were rendering some compensation to Waife for the disappointment he would experience when Sophy's claims came to be discussed —if he could assist in relieving the old man's mind as to the ultimate fate of the son for whom he had made so grand a sacrifice, Darrell spoke to Waife somewhat in detail of the views with which he had instructed Colonel Morley to find out and to treat with Jasper. He heard from the Colonel almost daily. Alban had not yet discovered Jasper, nor even succeeded in tracing Mrs. Crane! But an account of Jasper's wild farewell visit to that den

of thieves, from which he had issued safe and triumphant, had reached the ears of a detective employed by the Colonel, and on tolerably good terms with Cutts; and it was no small comfort to know that Jasper had finally broken with those miscreant comrades, and had never again been seen in their haunts. As Arabella had introduced herself to Alban by her former name, and neither he nor Darrell was acquainted with what she now bore, and as no questions on the subject could be put to Waife during the earlier stages of his illness, so it was several days before the Colonel had succeeded in tracing her out as Mrs. Crane of Podden Place—a discovery effected by a distant relation to whom he had been referred at the famous school of which Arabella had been the pride, and who was no doubt the owner of those sheepskin account-books by which the poor grim woman had once vainly sought to bribe Jasper into honest work. But the house in Podden Place was shut up—not a soul in charge of it. The houses immediately adjoining it were tenantless. The Colonel learned, however, from a female servant in an opposite house, that several days ago she had seen a tall, powerful-looking man enter Mrs. Crane's street-door; that she had not seen him quit it; and that some evenings afterwards, as this servant was closing up the house in which she served, she had remarked a large private carriage driven away from Mrs. Crane's door; that it was too dark to see who were in the carriage, but she had noticed a woman whom she felt fully sure was Mrs. Crane's servant, Bridgett Greggs, on the box beside the coachman.

Alban had been to the agent employed by Mrs. Crane in the letting of her houses, but had not there gained any information. The Colonel believed that Mrs. Crane had succeeded in removing Jasper from London—had, perhaps, accompanied him abroad. If with her, at all events for the present he was safe from the stings of want, and with one who had sworn to save him from his own guilty self. If, however, still in England, Alban had no doubt, sooner or later, to hunt him up.

Upon the whole, this conjectural information, though unsatisfactory, allayed much anxiety. Darrell made the most of it in his representations to Waife. And the old man, as we know, was one not hard to comfort, never quarrelling irrevocably with Hope.

And now Waife is rapidly recovering. Darrell, after spending the greater part of several days, intent upon a kind of study from which he had been estranged for many years, takes to frequent absences for the whole day; goes up to London by the earliest train, comes back by the latest. George Morley also goes to London for a few hours. Darrell, on returning, does not allude to the business which took him to the metropolis; neither does George, but the latter seems unusually animated and excited. At length, after one of these excursions, so foreign to his habits, he and George enter together the old man's apartment not long before the early hour at which the convalescent retires to rest. Sophy was seated on the footstool at Waife's knee, reading the Bible to him, his hand resting lightly on her bended head. The sight touched both George and Darrell; but Darrell of the two was the more affected. What young, pure voice shall read to *him* the Book of Hope in the evening of lonely age? Sophy started in some confusion, and as, in quitting the room, she passed by Darrell, he took her hand gently, and scanned her features more deliberately, more earnestly than he had ever yet seemed to do; then he sighed, and dropped the hand, murmuring, "Pardon me." Was he seeking to read in that fair face some likeness to the Darrell lineaments? If he had found it, what then? But when Sophy was gone, Darrell came straight to Waife with a cheerful brow—with a kindling eye.

"William Losely," said he.

"Waife, if you please, sir," interrupted the old man.

"William Losely," repeated Darrell, "justice seeks to repair, so far as, alas! it now can, the wrongs inflicted on the name of William Losely. Your old friend Alban Morley supplying me with the notes he had made in the matter of your trial, I arranged the evidence they furnished. The Secretary for the Home Department is one of my most intimate political friends—a man of humanity—of sense. I placed that evidence before him. I, George, and Mr. Hartopp, saw him after he had perused it——"

"My—son—Lizzy's son!"

"His secret will be kept. The question was not who committed the act for which you suffered, but whether *you* were clearly, incontestably, innocent of the act, and in pleading guilty, did but sublimely bear the penalty of

another. There will be no new trial—there are none who would prosecute. I bring back to you the Queen's free pardon under the Great Seal. I should explain to you that this form of the royal grace is so rarely given that it needed all the strength and affecting circumstance of your peculiar case to justify the Home Secretary in listening, not only to the interest I could bring to bear in your favour, but to his own humane inclinations. The pardon under the Great Seal differs from an ordinary pardon. It purges the blood from the taint of felony—it remits all the civil disabilities which the mere expiry of a penal sentence does not remove. In short, as applicable to your case, it becomes virtually a complete and formal attestation of your innocence. Alban Morley will take care to apprise those of your old friends who may yet survive, of that revocation of unjust obloquy, which this royal deed implies —Alban Morley, who would turn his back on the highest noble in Britain if but guilty of some jockey trick on the turf! Live henceforth openly, and in broad daylight if you please; and trust to us three—the Soldier, the Lawyer, the Churchman—to give to this paper that value which your Sovereign's advisers intend it to receive."

"Your hand now, dear old friend!" cried George. "You remember I commanded you once to take mine as man and gentleman—as man and gentleman, now honour me with yours."

"Is it possible?" faltered Waife, one hand in George's, the other extended in imploring appeal to Darrell—"is it possible? I vindicated—I cleared—and yet no felon's dock for Jasper!—the son not criminated by the father's acquittal! Tell me that! again—again!"

"It is so, believe me. All that rests is to force on that son, if he have a human heart, the conviction that he will be worse than a parricide if he will not save himself."

"And he will—he shall. Oh, that I could but get at him," exclaimed the preacher.

"And now," said Darrell—"now, George, leave us; for now, upon equal terms, we two fathers can discuss family differences."

CHAPTER VIII.

Sophy's claim examined and canvassed.

"I TAKE this moment," said Darrell, when left alone with Waife—(ah, reader, let *us* keep to that familiar name to the last!)—"I take this moment," said Darrell, "the first moment in which you can feel thoroughly assured that no prejudice against yourself clouds my judgment in reference to her whom you believe to be your grandchild, to commence, and I trust to conclude for ever, the subject which twice brought you within these walls. On the night of your recent arrival here, you gave me this copy of a Frenchwoman's declaration, to the effect that two infants had been placed out with her to nurse; that one of them was my poor daughter's infant, who was about to be taken away from her; that the other was confided to her by its parent, a French lady, whom she speaks of as a very liberal and distinguished person, but whose name is not stated in the paper."

WAIFE.—"The confession describes that lady as an *artiste;* distinguished *artiste* is the expression—viz., a professional person—a painter—an actress—a singer—or—"

DARRELL (drily).—"An opera-dancer! I understand the French word perfectly. And I presume the name is not mentioned in the document, from motives of delicacy; the child of a distinguished French *artiste* is not necessarily born in wedlock. But this lady was very grateful to the nurse for the care shown to her infant, who was very sickly; and promised to take the nurse, and the nurse's husband also, into her service. The nurse states that she herself was very poor; that the lady's offer appeared to her like a permanent provision; that the life of this *artiste's* infant was of the utmost value to her—the life of my poor daughter's child of comparative insignificance. But the infant of the *artiste* died, and the nurse's husband put it into his wife's head to tell your son (then a widower, and who had seen so little of his child as to be easily deceived), that it was his infant who died. The nurse shortly afterwards removed to Paris, taking with her to the *artiste's* house the child who in reality was my daughter's."

"It seems very probable, does it not—does it not?" said the ex-comedian eagerly.

"It seems to me," replied the ex-lawyer, "very probable that a witness, entering into court with the confession of one villanous falsehood, would have little scruple to tell another. But I proceed. This rich and liberal *artiste* dies; the nurse's conscience then suddenly awakens—she sees Mr. Hammond—she informs him of the fraud she has practised. A lady of rank, who had known Matilda, and had seen both the infants when both were living under the nurse's charge, and observed them more attentively than your son had done—corroborates the woman's story, stating that the *artiste's* child had dark eyes instead of blue; that the *artiste* herself was never deceived—but, having taken a great fancy to the spurious infant, was willing to receive and cherish it as her own; and that she knows several persons who will depose that they heard the *artiste* say that the child was not her own. On this evidence your son takes to himself this child—and this child is your Sophy—and you wish me to acknowledge her as my daughter's offspring. Do not look me so earnestly in the face, my dear and respected guest. It was when you read in my face, what my lips shrank from uttering, that your emotions overcame your strength, and your very mind deserted you. Now, be firmer. Your Sophy has no need of me—she is under your charge, and your name is cleared. She has found a friend—a protectress—in her own sex. Lady Montfort's rank gives to her a position in the world as high as I could offer; and as to mere pecuniary provision for her, make your mind easy—it shall be secured. But bear with me when I add, resolutely and calmly, that this nurse's attestation is to me a grosser and poorer attempt at imposture than I had anticipated; and I am amazed that a man of your abilities should have been contented to accept it."

"Oh, Mr. Darrell, don't say so! It was such a blessing to think, when my son was lost to me, that I might fill up the void in my heart with an innocent, loving child. Don't talk of my abilities. If you, whose abilities none can question—if you had longed and yearned for such a comforter—if you had wished—if you wished now this tale to be true, you would have believed it too; you would believe it now—you would indeed. Two men look so differently

at the same story—one deeply interested that it it should be true—one determined, if possible, to find it false. Is it not so?"

Darrell smiled slightly, but could not be induced to assent even to so general a proposition. He felt as if he were pitted against a counsel who would take advantage of every concession.

Waife continued. "And whatever seems most improbable in this confession, is rendered probable at once—if—if—we may assume that my unhappy son, tempted by the desire to—to—"

"Spare yourself—I understand—if your son wished to obtain his wife's fortune, and therefore connived at the exchange of the infants, and was therefore, too, enabled always to corroborate the story of the exchange whenever it suited him to reclaim the infant, I grant this—and I grant that the conjecture is sufficiently plausible to justify you in attaching to it much weight. We will allow that it was his interest at one time to represent his child, though living, as no more; but you must allow also that he would have deemed it his interest, later, to fasten upon me, as my daughter's, a child to whom she never gave birth. Here we entangle ourselves in a controversy without data, without facts. Let us close it. Believe what you please. Why should I shake convictions that render you happy? Be equally forbearing with me. I do full justice to your Sophy's charming qualities. In herself, the proudest parent might rejoice to own her; but I cannot acknowledge her to be the daughter of Matilda Darrell. And the story that assured you she was your grandchild, still more convinces me that she is not mine!"

"But be not thus inflexible, I implore you;—you can be so kind, so gentle;—she would be such a blessing to you—later—perhaps—when I am dead. I am pleading for your sake—I owe you so much! I should repay you, if I could but induce you to inquire—and if inquiry should prove that I am right."

"I have inquired sufficiently."

"Then I'll go and find out the nurse. I'll question her. I'll——"

"Hold. Be persuaded! Hug your belief! Inquire no farther!"

"Why—why?"

Darrell was mute.

Waife passed and repassed his hand over his brow, and then cried suddenly,—"But if I could prove her not to be my grandchild, then she might be happy!—then—then—ah, sir, young Haughton tells me that if she were but the daughter of honest parents—no child of Jasper's, no grandchild of mine—then you might not be too proud to bless her at least as his bride! And, sir, the poor child loves the young man. How could she help it? And, at her age, life without hope is either very short, or very, very long! Let me inquire! I should be happy even to know that she was not my grandchild. I should not love her less; and then she would have others to love her when I am gone to Lizzy!"

Darrell was deeply moved. To him there was something in this old man—ever forgetting himself, ever so hurried on by his heart—something, I say, in this old man, before which Darrell felt his intellect subdued, and his pride silenced and abashed.

"Yes, sir," said Waife, musingly, "so let it be. I am well now. I will go to France to-morrow."

Darrell nerved his courage. He had wished to spare Waife the pain which his own persuasions caused to himself. Better now to be frank. He laid his hand on Waife's shoulder, and, looking him in the face, said solemnly,—"I entreat you not! Do you suppose that I would not resume inquiry in person, nor pause till the truth were made amply clear, if I had not strong reason to prefer doubt to certainty?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"There is a woman whose career is, I believe, at this moment revived into fresh notoriety as the heroine of some drama on the stage of Paris—a woman who, when years paled her fame and reft her spoils, as a courtesan renowned for the fools she had beggared, for the young hearts she had corrupted, sought plunder still by crimes, to which law is less lenient: Charged with swindling, with fraud, with forgery, and at last more than suspected as a practised poisoner, she escaped by suicide the judgment of human tribunals."

"I know of whom you speak—that dreadful Gabrielle Desmarets, but for whom my sacrifice to Jasper's future might not have been in vain! It was to save Sophy from

the chance of Jasper's ever placing her within reach of that woman's example that I took her away."

"Is it not, then, better to forbear asking who were your Sophy's parents, than to learn from inquiry that she is indeed your grandchild, and that her mother was Gabrielle Desmarets?"

Waife uttered a cry like a shriek, and then sate voiceless and aghast. At last he exclaimed, "I am certain it is not so! Did you ever see that woman?"

"Never that I know of; but George tells me that he heard your son state to you that she had made acquaintance with me under another name, and if there was a design to employ her in confirmation of his tale—if he was then speaking truth to you, doubtless this was the lady of rank referred to in the nurse's confession—doubtless this was the woman once palmed upon me as Matilda's *confidante*. In that case I have seen her. What then?"

"Mother was not written on her face! She could never have been a mother. Oh, you may smile, sir; but all my life I have been a reader of the human face; and there is in the aspect of some women the barrenness as of stone—no mother's throb in their bosom—no mother's kiss on their lips."

"I am a poor reader of women's faces," said Darrell; "but she must be very unlike women in general, who allows you to know her a bit better if you stood reading her face till doomsday. Besides, at the time you saw Gabrielle Desmarets, her mode of life had perhaps given to her an aspect not originally in her countenance. And I can only answer your poetic conceit by a poetic illustration—Niobe turned to stone; but she had a great many daughters before she petrified. Pardon me, if I would turn off by a jest a thought that I see would shock you, as myself, if gravely encouraged. Encourage it not. Let us suppose it only a chance that inquiry might confirm this conjecture; but let us shun that chance. Meanwhile, if inquiry is to be made, one more likely than either of us to get at the truth has promised to make it, and sooner or later we may learn from her the results—I mean that ill-fated Arabella Fossett, whom you knew as Crane."

Waife was silent; but he kept turning in his hand, almost disconsolately, the document which assoiled him from the felon's taint, and said at length, as Darrell was

about to leave, "And this thing is of no use to *her*, then?"

Darrell came back to the old man's chair, and said softly, "Friend, do not fancy that the young have only one path to happiness. You grieve that I cannot consent to Lionel's marriage with your Sophy. Dismiss from your mind the desire for the Impossible. Gently wean from hers what is but a girl's first fancy."

"It is a girl's first love."

"And if it be," said Darrell, calmly, "no complaint more sure to yield to change of air. I have known a girl as affectionate, as pure, as full of all womanly virtues, as your Sophy (and I can give her no higher praise)—loved more deeply than Lionel *can* love; professing, doubtless at the time believing, that she also loved for life; betrothed too; faith solemnised by promise; yet in less than a year she was another's wife. Change of air, change of heart! I do not underrate the effect which a young man, so winning as Lionel, would naturally produce on the fancy or the feelings of a girl, who as yet, too, has seen no others; but impressions in youth are characters in the sand. Grave them ever so deeply, the tide rolls over them; and when the ebb shows the surface again, the characters are gone, for the sands are shifted. Courage! Lady Montfort will present to her others with forms as fair as Lionel's, and as elegantly dressed. With so much in her own favour, there are young patricians enough who will care not a rush what her birth;—young lords—Lady Montfort knows well how fascinating young lords can be! Courage! before a year is out, you will find new characters written on the sand."

"You don't know Sophy, sir," said Waife, simply; "and I see you are resolved not to know her. But you say Arabella Crane is to inquire; and should the inquiry prove that she is no child of Gabrielle Desmarets—that she is either your own grandchild or not mine—that——"

"Let me interrupt you. If there be a thing in the world that is cruel and treacherous, it is a false hope! Crush out of every longing thought the belief that this poor girl can prove to be one whom, with my consent, my kinsman can woo to be his wife. Lionel Haughton is the sole kinsman left to whom I can bequeath this roof-tree—these acres, hallowed to me because associated with my earliest lessons in honour and with the dreams which di-

rected my life. He must take with the heritage the name it represents. In his children, that name of Darrell can alone live still in the land. I say to you, that even were my daughter now in existence, she would not succeed me —she would not inherit nor transmit that name. Why?—not because I am incapable of a Christian's forgiveness, but because I am not capable of a gentleman's treason to his ancestors and himself;—because Matilda Darrell was false and perfidious;—because she was dead to honour, and therefore her birthright to a heritage of honour was irrevocably forfeited. And since you compel me to speak rudely, while in you I revere a man above the power of law to degrade—while, could we pass a generation, and Sophy were your child by your Lizzy, I should proudly welcome an alliance that made you and me as brothers—yet I cannot contemplate—it is beyond my power—I cannot contemplate the picture of Jasper Losely's daughter, even by my own child, the Mistress in my father's home—the bearer of my father's name. 'Tis in vain to argue. Grant me the slave of a prejudice—grant these ideas to be antiquated bigotry—I am too old to change. I ask from others no sacrifice which I have not borne. And whatever be Lionel's grief at my resolve, grief will be my companion long after he has forgotten that he mourned."

CHAPTER IX.

Poor Sophy!

The next morning Mills, in giving Sophy a letter from Lady Montfort, gave her also one for Waife, and she recognised Lionel Haughton's handwriting on the address. She went straight to Waife's sitting-room, for the old man had now resumed his early habits, and was up and dressed. She placed the letter in his hands without a word, and stood by his side while he opened it, with a certain still firmness in the expression of her face, as if she were making up her mind to some great effort. The letter was ostensibly one of congratulation. Lionel had seen Darrell the day before, after the latter had left the Home Secretary's office, and had learned that all which Justice could do to repair the wrong inflicted had been done. *Here* Lionel's words, though brief, were cordial, and almost joyous; but

then came a few sentences steeped in gloom. There was an allusion, vague and delicate in itself, to the eventful conversation with Waife in reference to Sophy—a sombre, solemn farewell conveyed to her and to hope—a passionate prayer for her happiness—and then an abrupt wrench, as it were, away from a subject too intolerably painful to prolong—an intimation that he had succeeded in exchanging into a regiment very shortly to be sent into active service; that he should set out the next day to join that regiment in a distant part of the country; and that he trusted, should his life be spared by war, that it would be many years before he should revisit England. The sense of the letter was the more affecting in what was concealed than in what was expressed. Evidently Lionel desired to convey to Waife, and leave it to him to inform Sophy, that she was henceforth to regard the writer as vanished out of her existence —departed, as irrevocably as depart the Dead.

While Waife was reading, he had turned himself aside from Sophy; he had risen—he had gone to the deep recess of the old mullioned window, half screening himself beside the curtain. Noiselessly, Sophy followed; and when he had closed the letter, she laid her hand on his arm, and said very quietly, "Grandfather, may I read that letter?"

Waife was startled, and replied on the instant, "No, my dear."

"It is better that I should," said she, with the same quiet firmness; and then seeing the distress in his face, she added, with her more accustomed sweet docility, yet with a forlorn droop of the head—"But as you please, grandfather."

Waife hesitated an instant. Was she not right?—would it not be better to show the letter? After all, she must confront the fact that Lionel could be nothing to her henceforth; and would not Lionel's own words wound her less than all Waife could say? So he put the letter into her hands, and sate down, watching her countenance.

At the opening sentences of congratulation, she looked up inquiringly. Poor man, he had not spoken to her of what at another time it would have been such joy to speak; and he now, in answer to her look, said almost sadly, "Only about *me*, Sophy; what does that matter?" But before the girl read a line farther, she smiled on him, and tenderly kissed his furrowed brow.

"Don't read on, Sophy," said he quickly. She shook her head and resumed. His eye still upon her face, he marked it changing as the sense of the letter grew upon her, till, as, without a word, with scarce a visible heave of the bosom, she laid the letter on his knees, the change had become so complete, that it seemed as if ANOTHER stood in her place. In very young and sensitive persons, especially female (though I have seen it even in our hard sex), a great and sudden shock or revulsion of feeling reveals itself thus in the almost preternatural alteration of the countenance. It is not a mere paleness—a skin-deep loss of colour: it is as if the whole bloom of youth had rushed away; hollows, never discernible before, appear in the cheek that was so round and smooth; the muscles fall as in mortal illness; a havoc, as of years, seems to have been wrought in a moment; Flame itself does not so suddenly ravage—so suddenly alter—leave behind it so ineffable an air of desolation and ruin. Waife sprang forward and clasped her to his breast.

"You will bear it, Sophy! The worst is over now. Fortitude, my child!—fortitude! The human heart is wonderfully sustained when it is not the conscience that weighs it down—griefs, that we think at the moment must kill us, wear themselves away. I speak the truth, for I too have suffered!"

"Poor grandfather!" said Sophy, gently; and she said no more. But when he would have continued to speak comfort, or exhort to patience, she pressed his hand tightly, and laid her finger on her lip. He was hushed in an instant.

Presently she began to move about the room, busying herself, as usual, in those slight, scarce perceptible arrangements by which she loved to think that she ministered to the old man's simple comforts. She placed the arm-chair in his favourite nook by the window, and before it the footstool for the poor lame foot; and drew the table near the chair, and looked over the books that George had selected for his perusal from Darrell's library; and chose the volume in which she saw his mark, to place nearest to his hand, and tenderly cleared the mist from his reading-glass; and removed one or two withered or ailing snowdrops from the little winter nosegay she had gathered for him the day before—he watching her all the time, silent as

herself, not daring, indeed, to speak, lest his heart should overflow.

These little tasks of love over, she came towards him a few paces, and said—"Please, dear grandfather, tell me all about what has happened to yourself, which should make us glad—that is, by-and-by; but nothing as to the rest of that letter. I will just think over it by myself; but never let us talk of it, grandy, dear, never more—never more."

CHAPTER X.

Trees that, like the poplar, lift upward all their boughs, give no shade and no shelter, whatever their height. Trees the most lovingly shelter and shade us, when, like the willow, the higher soar their summits, the lowlier droop their boughs.

Usually when Sophy left Waife in the morning, she would wander out into the grounds, and he could see her pass before his window; or she would look into the library, which was almost exclusively given up to the Morleys, and he could hear her tread on the old creaking stairs. But now she had stolen into her own room, which communicated with his sitting-room—a small lobby alone intervening—and there she remained so long that he grew uneasy. He crept softly to her door and listened. He had a fineness of hearing almost equal to his son's; but he could not hear a sob—not a breath. At length he softly opened the door, and looked in with caution.

The girl was seated at the foot of the bed, quite still—her eyes fixed on the ground, and her finger to her lip, just as she had placed it there when imploring silence; so still, it might be even slumber. All who have grieved respect grief. Waife did not like to approach her; but he said, from his stand at the threshold—"The sun is quite bright now, Sophy; go out for a little while, darling."

"She did not look round, she did not stir; but she answered with readiness—"Yes, presently."

So he closed the door and left her. An hour passed away; he looked in again; there she was still—in the same place, in the same attitude.

"Sophy, dear, it is time to take your walk; go—Mrs. Morley is in front, before my window. I have called to her to wait for you."

"Yes—presently," answered Sophy, and she did not move.

Waife was seriously alarmed. He paused a moment—then went back to his room—took his hat and his staff—came back.

"Sophy, I should like to hobble out and breathe the air; it will do me good. Will you give me your arm? I am still very weak."

Sophy now started—shook back her fair curls—rose—put on her bonnet, and in less than a minute was by the old man's side. Drawing his arm fondly into hers, they descend the stairs; they are in the garden; Mrs. Morley comes to meet them—then George. Waife exerts himself to talk—to be gay—to protect Sophy's abstracted silence by his own active, desultory, erratic humour. Twice or thrice, as he leans on Sophy's arm, she draws it still nearer to her, and presses it tenderly. She understands—she thanks him. Hark! from some undiscovered hiding-place near the water—Fairthorn's flute! The Music fills the landscape as with a living presence; the swans pause upon the still lake—the tame doe steals through yonder leafless trees; and now, musing and slow, from the same desolate coverts, comes the doe's master. The music spells them all. Guy Darrell sees his guests where they have halted by the stone sun-dial. He advances—joins them—congratulates Waife on his first walk as a convalescent. He quotes Gray's well-known verses applicable to that event,* and when, in that voice sweet as the flute itself, he comes to the lines—

"The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise"—

Sophy, as if suddenly struck with remorse at the thought that she, and she alone, was marring that opening paradise to the old man in his escape from the sick-room to "the sun, the air, the skies," abruptly raised her looks from the ground, and turned them full upon her guardian's face, with an attempt at gladness in her quivering smile, which, whatever its effect on Waife, went straight to the innermost heart of Guy Darrell. On the instant, he recognised, as by intuitive sympathy, the anguish from which that smile struggled forth—knew that Sophy had now learned

* "See the wretch who long has tost," &c.—GRAY.

that grief which lay deep within himself—that grief which makes a sick chamber of the whole external world, and which greets no more, in the common boons of Nature, the opening Paradise of recovered Hope! His eye lingered on her face as its smile waned, and perceived that CHANGE which had so startled Waife. Involuntarily he moved to her side—involuntarily drew her arm within his own—she thus supporting the one who cherished—supported by the one who disowned her. Guy Darrell might be stern in resolves which afflicted others, as he was stern in afflicting himself; but for *others* he had at least compassion.

Poor Waife, with nature so different, marked Darrell's movement, and, ever ready to seize on comfort, said inly—"He relents. I will not go to-morrow as I had intended. Sophy must win her way; who can resist her?"

Talk languished—the wintry sun began to slope—the air grew keen—Waife was led in—the Morleys went up into his room to keep him company—Sophy escaped back to her own. Darrell continued his walk, plunging deep into his maze of beechwoods, followed by the doe. The swans dip their necks amongst the water-weeds; the flute has ceased, and drearily still is the grey horizon, seen through the skeleton boughs—seen behind the ragged sky-line of shaft and parapet in the skeleton palace.

Darrell does not visit Waife's room that day; he concludes that Waife and Sophy would wish to be much alone; he dreads renewal of the only subject on which he has no cheering word to say. Sophy's smile, Sophy's face haunted him. In vain he repeated to himself—"Tut, it will soon pass—only a girl's first fancy."

But Sophy does not come back to Waife's room when the Morleys have left it: Waife creeps into her room as before, and, as before, there she sits—still as if in slumber. She comes in, however, of her accord, to assist, as usual, in the meal which he takes apart in his room: helps him—helps herself, but eats nothing. She talks, however, almost gaily; hopes he will be well enough to leave the next day; wonders whether Sir Isaac has missed them very much; reads to him Lady Montfort's affectionate letter to herself; and when dinner is over, and Waife's chair drawn to the fireside, she takes her old habitual place on the stool beside him, and says—"Now, dear grandfather—all about yourself—what happy thing has chanced to you?"

Alas! poor Waife has but little heart to speak; but he forces himself; what he has to say may do good to her.

"You know that, on my own account, I had reasons for secresy—change of name. I shunned all those whom I had ever known in former days; could take no calling in life by which I might be recognised; deemed it a blessed mercy of Providence that when, not able to resist offers that would have enabled me to provide for you as I never otherwise could, I assented to hazard an engagement at a London theatre—trusting for my incognito to an actor's arts of disguise—came the accident which, of itself, annihilated the temptation into which I had suffered myself to be led. For, ah, child! had it been known who and what was the William Waife whose stage-mime tricks moved harmless mirth, or tears as pleasant, the audience would have risen, not to applaud, but hoot—'Off, off,' from both worlds—the Mimic as the Real! Well, had I been dishonest, you—you alone felt that I could not have dared to take you, guiltless infant, by the hand. You remember that, on my return to Rugge's wandering theatre, bringing you with me, I exaggerated the effects of my accident—affected to have lost voice—stipulated to be spared appearing on his stage. That was not the mere pride of manhood shrinking from the display of physical afflictions. No. In the first village that we arrived at, I recognised an old friend, and I saw that, in spite of time, and the accident that had disfigured me, he recognised me, and turned away his face, as if in loathing. An old friend, Sophy—an old friend! Oh, it pierced me to the heart; and I resolved, from that day, to escape from Rugge's stage; and I consented, till the means of escape, and some less dependent mode of livelihood, were found, to live on thy earnings, child; for if I were discovered by other old friends, and they spoke out, my disgrace would reflect on you; and better to accept support from you than that! Alas! appearances were so strong against me, I never deemed they could be cleared away, even from the sight of my nearest friends. But Providence, you know, has been so kind to us hitherto; and so Providence will be kind to us again, Sophy. And now, the very man I thought most hard to me—this very Guy Darrell, under whose roof we are—has been the man to make those whose opinion I most value, know that I am not dishonest; and Providence has

raised a witness on my behalf in that very Mr. Hartopp, who judged me (and any one else might have done the same) too bad to be fit company for you! And that is why I am congratulated; and, oh, Sophy, though I have borne it as Heaven does enable us to bear what of ourselves we could not, and though one learns to shrug a patient shoulder under the obloquy which may be heaped on us by that crowd of mere strangers to us and to each other, which is called 'the WORLD,' yet to slink out of sight from a friend, as one more to be shunned than a foe—to take like a coward the lashings of scorn—to wince, one raw sore, from the kindness of Pity—to feel that in life the sole end of each shift and contrivance is to slip the view-hallo, into a grave without epitaph, by paths as stealthy and sly as the poor hunted fox, when his last chance—and sole one—is, by winding and doubling, to run under the earth; to know that it would be an ungrateful imposture to take chair at the board—at the hearth, of the man who, unknowing your secret, says—'Friend, be social;' accepting not a crust that one does not pay for, lest one feel a swindler to the kind fellow-creature whose equal we must not be!—all this—all this, Sophy, did at times chafe and gall more than I ought to have let it do, considering that there was ONE who saw it all, and would—Don't cry, Sophy; it is all over now."

"Not cry! Oh, it does me so much good."

"All over now! I am under this roof—without shame or scruple; and if Guy Darrell, knowing all my past, has proved my innocence in the eyes of those whom alone I cared for, I feel as if I had the right to stand before any crowd of men erect and shameless—a Man once more with men! Oh, darling! let me but see thy old happy smile again! The happy smiles of the young are the sunshine of the old. Be patient—be firm; Providence is so very kind, Sophy."

CHAPTER XI.

Waife exacts from George Morley the fulfilment of one of those promises which mean nothing or everything.

THE next day George Morley visited Waife's room earlier than usual. Waife had sent for him. Sophy was seated by her grandfather—his hand in hers. She had been exerting herself to the utmost to talk cheerfully—to shake from her aspect every cloud of sorrow. But still THAT CHANGE was there—more marked than even on the previous day. A few hours of intense struggle, a single night wholly without sleep, will tell on the face of early youth. Not till we, hard veterans, have gone through such struggles as life permits not to the slight responsibilities of new recruits—not till sleepless nights have grown to us familiar—will Thought seem to take, as it were, strength, not exhaustion, from unrelaxing exercise—nourish the brain, sustain the form by its own untiring, fleshless, spiritual immortality; not till many a winter has stripped the leaves; not till deep, and far out of sight, spread the roots that support the stem—will the beat of the east wind leave no sign on the rind.

George had not, indeed, so noticed, the day before, the kind of withering blight that had passed over the girl's countenance; but he did now—when she met his eye more steadfastly, and had resumed something of the open genial infantine grace of manner which constituted her peculiar charm, and which it was difficult to associate with deeper griefs than those of childhood.

"You must scold my grandfather," she said. "He chooses to fancy that he is not well enough yet to leave; and I am sure that he is, and will recover more quickly at home than here."

"Pooh!" said Waife; "you young things suppose we old folks can be as brisk as yourselves; but if I am to be scolded, leave Mr. George unawed by your presence, and go out, my dear, while the sun lasts: I know by the ways of that blackbird that the day will be overcast by noon."

As soon as they were alone, George said abruptly, "Your Sophy is looking very ill, and if you are well enough to leave, it might be better for her to move from

this gloomy house. Movement itself is a great restorative," added George, with emphasis.

"You see, then, that she looks ill—very ill," said Waife deliberately; "and there is that in your manner which tells me you guess the cause."

"I do guess it, from the glimpse which I caught of Lionel's face after he had been closeted a short time with Mr. Darrell at my uncle's house two days ago. I guess it also from a letter I have received from my uncle."

"You guess right—very right," said Waife, still with the same serious, tranquil manner. "I showed her this letter from young Haughton. Read it." George hurried his eye over the letter, and returned it silently. Waife proceeded—

"I was frightened yesterday by the strange composure she showed. In her face alone could be read what she suffered. We talked last night. I spoke of myself—of my old sorrows—in order to give her strength to support hers; and the girl has a heroic nature, Mr. George—and she is resolved to conquer or to die. But she will not conquer."

George began the usual strain of a consoler in such trials. Waife stopped him. "All that you can say, Mr. George, I know beforehand; and she will need no exhortation to prayer and to fortitude. I stole from my room when it was almost dawn. I saw light under the door of her chamber. I just looked in—softly—unperceived. She had not gone to bed. She was by the open window—stars dying out of the sky—kneeling on the floor, her face buried in her hands. She has prayed. In her soul, at this moment, be sure that she is praying now. She will devote herself to me—she will be cheerful—you will hear her laugh, Mr. George; but she will not conquer in this world; long before the new year is out, she will be looking down upon our grief with her bright smile; but we shall not see her, Mr. George. Do not think this is an old man's foolish terror; I know sorrow as physicians know disease; it has its mortal symptoms. Hush! hear me out. I have one hope—it is in you."

"In me?"

"Yes. Do you remember that you said, if I could succeed in opening to your intellect its fair career, you would be the best friend to me man ever had? and I said,

'Agreed, but change the party in the contract; befriend my Sophy instead of me, and if ever I ask you, help me in aught for her welfare and happiness;' and you said, 'With heart and soul.' That was the bargain, Mr. George. Now you have all that you then despaired of; you have the dignity of your sacred calling—you have the eloquence of the preacher. I cannot cope with Mr. Darrell—you can. He has a heart—it can be softened; he has a soul—it can be freed from the withes that tether it down; he has the virtues you can appeal to; and he has the pride which you, as a Christian minister, have the right to prove to be a sin. I cannot argue with him; I cannot reprove the man to whom I owe so much. All ranks of men and of mind should be equal to you, the pastor, the divine. You ministers of the gospel address yourselves unabashed to the poor, the humble, the uninstructed. Did Heaven give you power and commandment over these alone! Go, Preacher! go! Speak with the same authority to the great, to the haughty, to the wise!"

The old man's look and gesture were sublime.

The Preacher felt a thrill vibrate from his ear to his heart; but his reason was less affected than his heart. He shook his head mournfully. The task thus assigned to him was beyond the limits which custom prescribes to the priest of the English Church—dictation to a man not even of his own flock, upon the closest affairs of that man's private hearth and home! Our society allows no such privilege; and our society is right.

Waife, watching his countenance, saw at once what was passing in his mind, and resumed, as if answering George's own thought,—

"Ay, if you were but the common-place priest! But you are something more; you are the priest specially endowed for all special purposes of good. You have the mind to reason—the tongue to persuade—the majestic earnestness of impassioned zeal. Nor are you here the priest alone; you are here the friend, the confidant, of all for whom you may exert your powers. Oh, George Morley, I am a poor ignorant blunderer when presuming to exhort you as Christian minister; but in your own words—I address you as man and gentleman—you declared that 'thought and zeal should not stammer whenever I said—

Keep your promise.' I say it now—Keep faith to the child you swore to me to befriend!"

"I will go—and at once," said George, rising. "But be not sanguine. I see not a chance of success. A man so superior to myself in years, station, abilities, repute!"

"Where would be Christianity?" said Waife, "if the earliest preachers had raised such questions? There is a soldier's courage—is there not a priest's?"

George made no answer, but, with abstracted eye, gathered brow, and slow, meditative step, quitted the room, and sought Guy Darrell.

BOOK XII.

CHAPTER I.

The Man of the World shows more indifference to the things and doctrines of the World than might be supposed.—But he vindicates his character, which might otherwise be jeopardised, by the adroitness with which, having resolved to roast chestnuts in the ashes of another man's hearth, he handles them when hottest by the proxy of a—Cat's paw.

In the letter which George told Waife he had received from his uncle, George had an excuse for the delicate and arduous mission he undertook, which he did not confide to the old man, lest it should convey more hopes than its nature justified. In this letter, Alban related, with a degree of feeling that he rarely manifested, his farewell conversation with Lionel, who had just departed to join his new regiment. The poor young man had buoyed himself up with delighted expectations of the result of Sophy's prolonged residence under Darrell's roof; he had persuaded his reason that when Darrell had been thus enabled to see and judge of her for himself, he would be irresistibly attracted towards her; that Innocence, like Truth, would be mighty and prevail; Darrell was engaged in the attempt to clear William Losely's name and blood from the taint of felony;—Alban was commissioned to negotiate with Jasper Losely on any terms that would remove all chance of future disgrace from that quarter. Oh yes! to poor Lionel's eyes obstacles vanished—the future became clear. And thus, when, after telling him of his final interview with the minister, Darrell said, "I trust that, in bringing to William Losely this intelligence, I shall at least soften his disappointment, when I make it thoroughly clear to him how impossible it is that his Sophy can ever be more to me—to *us*—than a stranger whose virtues create an interest in her welfare"—Lionel was stunned as by a blow. Scarcely could he murmur—

"You have seen her—and your resolve remains the same."

"Can you doubt it?" answered Darrell, as if in surprise. "The resolve may now give me pain on my account, as before it gave me pain on yours. But if not moved by your pain, can I be moved by mine? *That* would be a baseness."

The Colonel, in depicting Lionel's state of mind after the young soldier had written his farewell to Waife, and previous to quitting London, expressed very gloomy forebodings. "I do not say," wrote he, "that Lionel will guiltily seek death in the field, nor does death there come more to those who seek than to those who shun it; but he will go upon a service exposed to more than ordinary suffering, privation, and disease—without that rallying power of hope—that Will, and Desire To Live, which constitute the true stamina of Youth. And I have always set a black mark upon those who go into war joyless and despondent. Send a young fellow to the camp with his spirits broken, his heart heavy as a lump of lead, and the first of those epidemics which thin ranks more than the cannon, says to itself, 'There is a man for me!' Any doctor will tell you that, even at home, the gay and light-hearted walk safe through the pestilence, which settles on the moping as malaria settles on a marsh. Confound Guy Darrell's ancestors, they have spoilt Queen Victoria as good a young soldier as ever wore sword by his side! Six months ago, and how blithely Lionel Haughton looked forth to the future!—all laurel!—no cypress! And now I feel as if I had shaken hands with a victim sacrificed by Superstition to the tombs of the dead. I cannot blame Darrell: I daresay in the same position I might do the same. But no; on second thoughts, I should not! If Darrell does not choose to marry and have sons of his own, he has no right to load a poor boy with benefits, and say, 'There is but one way to prove your gratitude; remember my ancestors, and be miserable for the rest of your days!' Darrell, forsooth, intends to leave to Lionel the transmission of the old Darrell name; and the old Darrell name must not be tarnished by the marriage on which Lionel has unluckily set his heart! I respect the old name; but it is not like the House of Vipont—a British Institution. And if some democratical cholera, which does not care a rush for old names, carries off Lionel, what becomes of the old name then? Lionel is not Darrell's son; Lionel need not, per-

force, take the old name. Let the young man live as Lionel Haughton, and the old name die with Guy Darrell!

"As to the poor girl's birth and parentage, I believe we shall never know them. I quite agree with Darrell that it will be wisest never to inquire. But I dismiss, as far-fetched and improbable, his supposition that she is Gabrielle Desmarets' daughter. To me it is infinitely more likely, either that the deposition of the Nurse, which poor Willy gave to Darrell, and which Darrell showed to me, is true (only, that Jasper was conniving at the temporary suspension of his child's existence while it suited his purpose)—or that, at the worst, this mysterious young lady is the daughter of the *artiste*. In the former supposition, as I have said over and over again, a marriage between Lionel and Sophy is precisely that which Darrell should desire; in the latter case, of course, if Lionel were the head of the House of Vipont, the idea of such an union would be inadmissible. But Lionel, *entre nous*, is the son of a ruined spendthrift by a linen-draper's daughter. And Darrell has but to give the handsome young couple five or six thousand a-year, and I know the world well enough to know that the world will trouble itself very little about their pedigrees. And really Lionel should be left wholly free to choose whether he prefer a girl whom he loves with his whole heart, five or six thousand a-year, happiness, and the chance of honours in a glorious profession to which he will then look with glad spirits—or a life-long misery, with the right, after Darrell's death—that I hope will not be these thirty years—to bear the name of Darrell instead of Haughton; which, if I were the last of the Haughtons, and had any family pride—as, thank Heaven, I have not—would be a painful exchange to me; and dearly-bought by the addition of some additional thousands a-year, when I had grown perhaps as little disposed to spend them as Guy Darrell himself is. But, after all, there is one I compassionate even more than young Haughton. My morning rides of late have been much in the direction of Twickenham, visiting our fair cousin Lady Montfort. I went first to lecture her for letting these young people see so much of each other. But my anger melted into admiration and sympathy, when I found with what tender, exquisite, matchless friendship she had been all the while scheming for Darrell's happiness; and with what remorse she now

contemplated the sorrow which a friendship so grateful, and a belief so natural, had innocently occasioned. That remorse is wearing her to death. Dr. F——, who attended poor dear Willy, is also attending her; and he told me privately, that his skill was in vain—that her case baffled him; and he had very serious apprehensions. Darrell owes some consideration to such a friend. And to think that here are lives permanently embittered, if not risked, by the ruthless obstinacy of the best-hearted man I ever met! Now, though I have already intimated my opinions to Darrell with a candour due to the oldest and dearest of my friends, yet I have never, of course, in the letters I have written to him, or the talk we have had together, spoken out as plainly as I do in writing to you. And having thus written, without awe of his grey eye and dark brow, I have half a mind to add—'seize him in a happy moment and show him this letter.' Yes, I give you full leave; show it to him if you think it would avail. If not, throw it into the fire, and pray Heaven for those whom we poor mortals cannot serve."

On the envelope, Alban had added these words—"But of course, before showing the enclosed, you will prepare Darrell's mind to weigh its contents." And probably it was in that curt and simple injunction that the subtle man of the world evinced the astuteness of which not a trace was apparent in the body of his letter.

Though Alban's communication had much excited his nephew, yet George had not judged it discreet to avail himself of the permission to show it to Darrell. It seemed to him that the pride of his host would take much more offence at its transmission through the hands of a third person, than at the frank tone of its reasonings and suggestions. And George had determined to re-enclose it to the Colonel, urging him to forward it himself to Darrell just as it was, with but a brief line to say, "that, on reflection, Alban submitted, direct to his old school-fellow, the reasonings and apprehensions which he had so unreservedly poured fourth in a letter commenced without the intention at which the writer arrived at the close." But now that the preacher had undertaken the duty of an advocate, the letter became his brief.

George passed through the library, through the study, up the narrow stair that finally conducted to the same

lofty cell in which Darrell had confronted the midnight robber who claimed a child in Sophy. With a nervous hand George knocked at the door.

Unaccustomed to any intrusion on the part of guest or household in that solitary retreat, somewhat sharply, as if in anger, Darrell's voice answered the knock.

"Who's there?"

"George Morley."

Darrell opened the door

CHAPTER II.

"A good archer is not known by his arrows, but his aim." "A good man is no more to be feared than a sheep." "A good surgeon must have an eagle's eye, a lion's heart, and a lady's hand." "A good tongue is a good weapon." And despite those suggestive or encouraging proverbs, George Morley has undertaken something so opposed to all proverbial philosophy, that it becomes a grave question what he will do with it.

"I COME," said George, "to ask you one of the greatest favours a man can confer upon another; it will take some little time to explain. Are you at leisure?"

Darrell's brow relaxed.

"Seat yourself in comfort, my dear George. If it be in my power to serve or to gratify Alban Morley's nephew, it is I who receive a favour." Darrell thought to himself, "The young man is ambitious—I may aid in his path towards a See!"

GEORGE MORLEY.—"First let me say that I would consult your intellect on a matter which habitually attracts and engages mine—that old vexed question of the origin and uses of Evil, not only in the physical, but the moral world; it involves problems over which I would ponder for hours as a boy—on which I wrote essays as a schoolman—on which I perpetually collect illustrations to fortify my views as a theologian."

"He is writing a book," thought Darrell, enviously; "and a book on such a subject will last him all his life. Happy man!"

GEORGE MORLEY.—"The Pastor, you know, is frequently consulted by the suffering and oppressed; frequently called upon to answer that question in which the scepticism of the humble and the ignorant ordinarily begins—'Why am I suffering? Why am I oppressed? Is this

the justice of Providence? Has the Great Father that benign pity, that watchful care for his children, which you preachers tell us?' Ever intent on deducing examples from the lives to which the clue has become apparent, must be the Priest who has to reason with Affliction caused by no apparent fault; and where, judged by the Canons of Human justice, cloud and darkness obscure the Divine —still to 'vindicate the ways of God to man.'"

DARRELL.—"A philosophy that preceded, and will outlive, all other schools. It is twin-born with the world itself. Go on; though the theme be inexhaustible, its interest never flags."

GEORGE MORLEY.—"Has it struck you, Mr. Darrell, that few lives have ever passed under your survey, in which the inexpressible tenderness of the Omniscient has been more visibly clear than in that of your guest, William Losely?"

DARRELL (surprised).—"Clear? To me, I confess that if ever there were an instance in which the Divine tenderness, the Divine justice, which I can never presume to doubt, was yet undiscernible to my bounded vision, it is in the instance of the very life you refer to. I see a man of admirable virtues—of a childlike simplicity of character, which makes him almost unconscious of the grandeur of his own soul—involved by a sublime self-sacrifice—by a virtue, not by a fault—in the most dreadful of human calamities—ignominous degradation;—hurled in the midday of life from the sphere of honest men—a felon's brand on his name—a vagrant in his age; justice at last, but tardy and niggard, and giving him but little joy when it arrives; because, ever thinking only of others, his heart is wrapped in a child whom he cannot make happy in the way in which his hopes have been set!—George—no, your illustration might be turned by a sceptic into an argument against you."

GEORGE MORLEY.—"Not unless the sceptic refused the elementary starting-ground from which you and I may reason; not if it be granted that man has a soul, which it is the object of this life to enrich and develop for another. We know from my uncle what William Losely was before this calamity befell him—a genial boon-companion—a careless, frank, 'good fellow'—all the virtues you now praise in him, dormant, unguessed even by himself. Sud-

denly came CALAMITY!—suddenly arose the SOUL! Degradation of name, and with it dignity of nature! How poor, how slight, how insignificant William Losely the hanger-on of rural Thanes compared with that William Waife whose entrance into this house, you—despite that felon's brand when you knew it was the martyr's glory, —greeted with noble reverence; whom, when the mind itself was stricken down—only the soul left to the wreck of the body—you tended with such pious care as he lay on your father's bed! And do you, who hold Nobleness in such honour—do you, of all men, tell me that you cannot recognise that Celestial tenderness which ennobled a Spirit for all Eternity?"

"George, you are right," cried Darrell; "and I was a blockhead and blunderer, as man always is when he mistakes a speck in his telescope for a blotch in the sun of a system."

GEORGE MORLEY.—"But more difficult it is to recognise the mysterious agencies of Heavenly Love when no great worldly adversity forces us to pause and question. Let Fortune strike down a victim, and even the heathen cries, 'This is the hand of God!' But where Fortune brings no vicissitude; where her wheel runs smooth, dropping wealth or honours as it rolls—where Affliction centres its work within the secret, unrevealing heart—there, even the wisest man may not readily perceive by what means Heaven is admonishing, forcing, or wooing him nearer to itself. I take the case of a man in whom Heaven acknowledges a favoured son. I assume his outward life crowned with successes, his mind stored with opulent gifts, his nature endowed with lofty virtues; what an heir to train through the brief school of earth for due place in the ages that roll on for ever! But this man has a parasite weed in each bed of a soul rich in flowers;—weed and flowers intertwined, stem with stem—their fibres uniting even deep down to the root. Can you not conceive with what untiring vigilant care Heaven will seek to disentangle the flower from the weed?—how (let me drop inadequate metaphor) — how Heaven will select for its warning chastisements that very error which the man has so blent with his virtues that he holds it a virtue itself?—how, gradually, slowly, pertinaciously, it will gather this beautiful nature all to itself—insist on a sacrifice it will ask

from no other? To complete the true nature of poor William Losely, Heaven ordained the sacrifice of worldly repute; to complete the true nature of Guy Darrell, God ordains him the sacrifice of PRIDE!"

Darrell started—half rose; his eye flashed—his cheek paled; but he remained silent.

"I have approached the favour I supplicate," resumed George, drawing a deep breath, as of relief. "Greater favour man can scarcely bestow upon his fellow. I entreat you to believe that I respect, and love, and honour you sufficiently to be for a while so lifted up into your friendship, that I may claim the privilege, without which friendship is but a form;—just as no freedom is more obnoxious than intrusion on confidence withheld, so no favour, I repeat, more precious than the confidence which a man of worth vouchsafes to him who invites it with no claim but the loyalty of his motives."

Said Darrell, softened, but with stateliness—"All human lives are as separate circles; they may touch at one point in friendly approach, but, even where they touch, each rounds itself from off the other. With this hint I am contented to ask at what point in my circle you would touch?"

GEORGE MORLEY.—"I thank you gratefully; I accept your illustration. The point is touched; I need no other." He paused a moment, as if concentrating all his thoughts, and then said, with musing accents—"Yes, I accept your illustration; I will even strengthen the force of the truth implied in it by a more homely illustration of my own. There are small skeleton abridgments of history which we give to children. In such a year a king was crowned—a battle was fought; there was some great disaster, or some great triumph. Of the true progress and development of the nation whose record is thus epitomised—of the complicated causes which lead to these salient events—of the animated, varied multitudinous life which has been hurrying on from epoch to epoch, the abridgment tells nothing. It is so with the life of each individual man: the life as it stands before us is but a sterile epitome—hid from our sight the EMOTIONS which are the People of the Heart. In such a year occurred a visible something—a gain—a loss—a success—a disappointment; the People of the Heart crowned or deposed a King. This is all we know; and

the most voluminous biography ever written must still be a meagre abridgment of all that really individualised and formed a man. I ask not your confidence in a single detail or fact in your existence which lies beyond my sight. Far from me so curious an insolence; but I do ask you this—Reflecting on your past life as a whole, have not your chief sorrows had a common idiosyncrasy? Have they not been strangely directed towards the frustration of some one single object—cherished by your earliest hopes, and, as if in defiance of fate, resolutely clung to even now?"

"It is true," muttered Darrell. "You do not offend me; go on!"

"And have not these SORROWS, in frustrating your object, often assumed, too, a certain uniformity in the weapons they use, in the quarter they harass or invade, almost as if it were a strategic policy that guided them where they could most pain, or humble, or eject a FOE that they were ordered to storm? Degrade you they could not; such was not their mission. Heaven left you intact a kingliness of nature—a loftiness of spirit, unabased by assaults levelled not against yourself, but your pride; your personal dignity, though singularly sensitive, though bitterly galled, stood proof. What might lower lesser men, lowered not you; Heaven left you that dignity, for it belongs alike to your intellect and your virtues—but suffered it to be a source of your anguish. Why? Because, not content with adorning your virtues, it was covering the fault against which were directed the sorrows. You frown—forgive me."

"You do not transgress, unless it be as a flatterer! If I frowned, it was unconsciously—the sign of thought, not anger. Pause!—my mind has left you for a moment; it is looking into the past."

The past!—Was it not true? That home to whose porch came in time the Black Horses, in time just to save from the last worst dishonour, but not save from years racked by each pang that can harrow man's dignity in each daily assault on the fort of man's pride; the sly treacherous daughter—her terrible marriage—the man whose disgrace she had linked to her blood, and whose life still was insult and threat to his own! True, what a war upon Pride! And even in that secret, and fatal love which had been of

all his griefs the most influential and enduring, had his pride been less bitterly wounded, and that pride less enthroned in his being, would his grief have been so relentless, his attempts at its conquest so vain? And then, even now—what was it said "I can bless"—holy LOVE! What was it said "but not pardon"—stern PRIDE! And so on to these last revolutions of sterile life. Was he not miserable in Lionel's and Sophy's misery? Forlorn in that Citadel of Pride—closed round and invested with Sorrows—and the last hopes that had fled to the fortress, slain in defence of its outworks. With hand shading his face, Darrell remained some minutes silent. At last he raised his head, and his eye was steadfast, his lip firm.

"George Morley," said he, "I acknowledge much justice in the censure you have conveyed, with so artful a delicacy, that if it fail to reform, it cannot displease, and leaves much to be seriously revolved in solitary self-commune. But though I may own that pride is not made for man, and that in the blindness of human judgment I may often have confounded pride with duty, and suffered for the mistake, yet that one prevailing object of my life, which with so startling a truth you say it has pleased Heaven to frustrate, I cannot hold an error in itself. You have learned enough from your uncle, seen enough of me yourself, to know what that object has been. You are scholar enough to concede to me that it is no ignoble homage which either nations or persons render to the ancestral Dead—that homage is an instinct in all but vulgar and sordid natures. Has a man no ancestry of his own—rightly and justly, if himself of worth, he appropriates to his lineage all the heroes, and bards, and patriots of his fatherland! A free citizen has ancestors in all the glorious chiefs that have adorned the State, on the sole condition that he shall revere their tombs, and guard their memory as a son! And thus, whenever they who speak trumpet-tongued to grand democracies, would rouse some quailing generation to heroic deed or sacrifice, they appeal in the Name of Ançestors, and call upon the living to be worthy of the dead? That which is so laudable—nay, so necessary a sentiment in the mass, cannot be a fault that angers Heaven in the man. Like all high sentiments, it may compel harsh and rugged duties; it may need the stern suppression of many a gentle impulse—of many a pleasing wish. But we must regard

it in its merit and consistency as a whole. And if, my eloquent and subtle friend, all you have hitherto said be designed but to wind into pleas for the same cause that I have already decided against the advocate in my own heart which sides with Lionel's generous love and yon fair girl's ingenuous and touching grace, let us break up the court; the judge has no choice but the law which imperiously governs his judgment."

GEORGE MORLEY.—"I have not hitherto presumed to apply to particular cases the general argument you so indulgently allow me to urge in favour of my theory, that in the world of the human heart, when closely examined, there is the same harmony of design as in the external universe; that in Fault and in Sorrow are the axioms, and problems, and postulates of a SCIENCE. Bear with me a little longer if I still pursue the same course of reasoning. I shall not have the arrogance to argue a special instance—to say, 'This you should do, this you should not do.' All I would ask is, leave to proffer a few more suggestions to your own large and candid experience."

Said Darrell, irresistibly allured on, but with a tinge of his grave irony, "You have the true genius of the pulpit, and I concede to you its rights. I will listen with the wish to profit—the more susceptible of conviction, because freed from the necessity to reply."

GEORGE MORLEY.—"You vindicate the object which has been the main ambition of your life. You say 'not an ignoble object.' Truly! ignoble objects are not for you. The question is, are there not objects *nobler*, which should have attained higher value, and led to larger results in the soul which Providence assigned to you; was not the proper place of the object you vindicate that of an auxiliary—a subordinate, rather than that of the all-directing, self-sufficing leader and autocrat of such various powers of mind? I picture you to myself—a lone, bold-hearted boy—in this ancient hall, amidst these primitive landscapes, in which old associations are so little disturbed by the modern—in which the wild turf of waste lands, vanishing deep into mazes of solemn wood, lends the scene to dreams of gone days—brings Adventure and Knighthood, and all the poetical colours of Eld, to unite the homage due to the ancestral dead with the future ambition of life;—Image full of interest and of pathos—a friendless child of a race

more beloved for its decay, looking dauntless on to poverty and toil, with that conviction of power which is born of collected purpose and earnest will; and recording his secret vow, that single-handed he will undo the work of destroying ages, and restore his line to its place of honour in the land!"

George paused, and tears stood in Darrell's eyes.

"Yes," resumed the scholar—"yes, for the child, for the youth, for the man in his first daring stride into the Action of Life, that object commands our respectful sympathies. But wait a few years. Has that object expanded? Has it led on into objects embracing humanity? Remains it alone and sterile in the bosom of successful genius? Or is it prolific and fruitful of grander designs—of more wide-spreading uses? Make genius successful, and all men have the right to say, 'Brother, help us!' What! no other object still but to build up a house!—to recover a line! What was grand at one stage of an onward career, is narrow and small at another! Ambition limited to the rise of a family! Can our sympathies still hallow *that!* No! In Guy Darrell successful—that ambition was treason to earth! Mankind was his family now! THEREFORE Heaven thwarted the object which opposes its own ends in creating you! THEREFORE childless you stand on your desolate hearth!—THEREFORE, lo! side by side—yon uncompleted pile—your own uncompleted life!"

Darrell sate dumb.—He was appalled!

GEORGE MORLEY.—"Has not that object stinted your very intellect? Has it not, while baffled in its own centred aim—has it not robbed you of the glory which youth craved, and which manhood might have won? Idolater to the creed of an Ancestor's NAME, has your own name that hold on the grateful respect of the Future, which men ever give to that genius whose objects are knit with mankind? Suddenly, in the zenith of life, amidst cheers, not of genuine renown,—cheers loud and brief as a mob's hurrah—calamities, all of which I know not, nor conjecture, interrupt your career;—and when your own life-long object is arrested, or rather when it is snatched from your eye, your genius renounces all uses. Fame, ever-during, was before you still, had your objects been those for which genius is given. You muse. Heaven permits these rude words to strike home! Guy Darrell, it is not too late!

Heaven's warnings are always in time. Reflect, with the one narrow object was fostered and fed the one master failing of Pride. To us as Christians, or as reasoners, it is not in this world that every duty is to find its special meed; yet by that same mystical LAW which makes Science of Sorrow, rewards are but often the normal effect of duties sublimely fulfilled. Out of your pride and your one-cherished object, has there grown happiness? Has the success which was not denied you achieved the link with posterity that your hand, if not fettered, would long since have forged? Grant that Heaven says, 'Stubborn child, yield at last to the warnings vouchsafed to thee by my love! From a son so favoured and strong I exact the most difficult offering! Thou hast sacrificed much, but for ends not prescribed in my law; sacrifice now to me the thing thou most clingest to—Pride. I make the pang I demand purposely bitter. I twine round the offering I ask the fibres that bleed in relaxing. What to other men would be no duty, is duty to thee, because it entails a triumphant self-conquest, and pays to Humanity the arrears of just dues long neglected.' Grant the hard sacrifice made; I must think Heaven has ends for your joy even here, when it asks you to part with the cause of your sorrows;—I must think that your evening of life may have sunshine denied to its noon. But with God are no bargains. A virtue, the most arduous because it must trample down what your life has exalted as virtue, is before you; distasteful, austere, repellant. The most inviting arguments in its favour are, that it proffers no bribes; men would acquit you in rejecting it; judged by our world's ordinary rule, men would be right in acquitting you. But if on reflection you say in your heart of hearts, 'This *is* a virtue,' you will follow its noiseless path up to the smile of God!"

The preacher ceased.

Darrell breathed a long sigh, rose slowly, took George's hand, pressed it warmly in both his own, and turned quickly and silently away. He paused in the deep recess where the gleam of the wintry sun shot through the small casement, aslant and pale on the massive wall: opening the lattice, he looked forth on the old hereditary trees—on the Gothic church-tower—on the dark evergreens that belted his father's tomb. Again he sighed, but this time the sigh had a haughty sound in its abrupt impatience; and George

felt that words written must remain to strengthen and confirm the effect of words spoken. He had at least obeyed his uncle's wise injunction—he had prepared Darrell's mind to weigh the contents of a letter, which, given in the first instance, would perhaps have rendered Darrell's resolution not less stubborn, by increasing the pain to himself which the resolution already inflicted.

Darrell turned, and looked towards George, as if in surprise to see him still lingering there.

"I have now but to place before you this letter from my uncle to myself; it enters into those details which it would have misbecome me specially to discuss. Remember, I entreat you, in reading it, that it is written by your oldest friend—by a man who has no dull discrimination in the perplexities of life, or the niceties of honour."

Darrell bowed his head in assent, and took the letter. George was about to leave the room.

"Stay," said Darrell, "'tis best to have but one interview—one conversation on the subject which has been just enforced on me; and the letter may need a comment or a message to your uncle." He stood hesitating, with the letter open in his hand; and, fixing his keen eye on George's pale and powerful countenance, said, "How is it that, with an experience of mankind, which you will pardon me for assuming to be limited, you yet read so wondrously the complicated human heart?"

"If I really have that gift," said George, "I will answer your question by another: Is it through experience that we learn to read the human heart—or is it through sympathy? If it be experience, what becomes of the Poet? If the Poet be born, not made, is it not because he is born to sympathise with what he has never experienced?"

"I see! There are born Preachers!"

Darrell reseated himself, and began Alban's letter. He was evidently moved by the Colonel's account of Lionel's grief, muttering to himself, "Poor boy!—but he is brave—he is young." When he came to Alban's forebodings on the effects of dejection upon the stamina of life, he pressed his hand quickly against his breast as if he had received a shock! He mused a while before he resumed his task; then he read rapidly and silently till his face flushed, and he repeated in a hollow tone, inexpressibly mournful,

"Let the young man live, and the old name die with Guy Darrell. Ay, ay! see how the world sides with Youth! What matters all else so that Youth have its toy!" Again his eye hurried on impatiently till he came to the passage devoted to Lady Montfort; then George saw that the paper trembled violently in his hand, and that his very lips grew white. "'Serious apprehensions,'" he muttered. "I owe 'consideration to such a friend.' This man is without a heart!"

He clenched the paper in his hand without reading farther. "Leave me this letter, George; I will give an answer to that and to you before night." He caught up his hat as he spoke, passed into the lifeless picture-gallery, and so out into the open air. George, dubious and anxious, gained the solitude of his own room, and locked the door.

CHAPTER III.

At last the great Question by Torture is fairly applied to Guy Darrell.

WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT? What will Guy Darrell do with the thought that weighs on his brain? rankles in his heart, perplexes his dubious conscience? What will he do with the Law which has governed his past life? What will he do with that shadow of A NAME which, alike in swarming crowds or in lonely burial-places, has spelled his eye and lured his step as a beckoning ghost? What will he do with the PRIDE from which the mask has been so rudely torn? What will he do with idols so long revered? *Are* they idols, or are they but symbols and images of holy truths? What will he do with the torturing problem, on the solution of which depend the honour due to consecrated ashes, and the rights due to beating hearts? There, restless he goes, the arrow of that question in his side—now through the broad waste lands—now through the dim woods, pausing oft with short quick sigh, with hand swept across his brow as if to clear away a cloud;—now snatched from our sight by the evergreens round the tomb in that still churchyard—now emerging slow, with melancholy eyes fixed on the old roof-tree! What will he do with it? The Question of Questions in which all

Futurity is opened, has him on its rack. WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT? Let us see.

CHAPTER IV.

Immunis aram si tetigit manus,
Non sumptuosa blandior hostia,
Mollivit aversas Penates,
Farre pio et saliente mica.—HORAT.

IT is the grey of the evening. Fairthorn is sauntering somewhat sullenly along the banks of the lake. He has missed, the last three days, his walk with Sophy—missed the pleasing excitement of talking *at* her, and *of* the family in whose obsolete glories he considers her very interest an obtrusive impertinence. He has missed, too, his more habitual and less irritating conversation with Darrell. In short, altogether he is put out, and he vents his spleen on the swans, who follow him along the wave as he walks along the margin, intimating either their affection for himself, or their anticipation of the bread-crumbs associated with his image—by the amiable note, half snort and half grunt, to which change of time or climate has reduced the vocal accomplishments of those classical birds, so pathetically melodious in the age of Moschus and on the banks of Cayster.

"Not a crumb, you unprincipled beggars," growled the musician. "You imagine that mankind are to have no other thought but that of supplying you with luxuries! And if you were asked, in a competitive examination, to define ME, your benefactor, you would say—'a thing very low in the scale of creation, without wings or even feathers, but which Providence endowed with a peculiar instinct for affording nutritious and palatable additions to the ordinary aliment of Swans!' Ay, you may grunt; I wish I had you—in a pie!"

Slowly, out through the gap between yon grey crag and the thorn-tree, paces the doe, halting to drink just where the faint star of eve shoots its gleam along the wave. The musician forgets the swans and quickens his pace, expecting to meet the doe's wonted companion. He is not disappointed. He comes on Guy Darrell where the twilight shadow falls darkest between the grey crag and the thorn-tree.

"Dear Fellow Hermit," said Darrell, almost gaily, yet with more than usual affection in his greeting and voice, "you find me just when I want you. I am as one whose eyes have been strained by a violent conflict of colours, and your quiet presence is like the relief of a return to green. I have news for you, Fairthorn. You, who know more of my secrets than any other man, shall be the first to learn a decision that must bind you and me more together —but not in these scenes, Dick.

'Ibimus—ibimus!
——————Supremum
Carpere iter, comites, parati!'"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Fairthorn. "My mind always misgives me when I hear you quoting Horace. Some reflection about the certainty of death, or other disagreeable subjects, is sure to follow!"

"Death! No, Dick—not now. Marriage-bells and joy, Dick! We shall have a wedding!"

"What! You will marry at last! And it must be that beautiful Caroline Lyndsay! It must—it must! You can never love another! You know it, my dear, dear master. I shall see you, then, happy before I die."

"Tut, foolish old friend!" said Darrell, leaning his arm tenderly on Fairthorn's shoulder, and walking on slowly towards the house. "How often must I tell you, that no marriage-bells can ring for me!"

"But you have told me, too, that you went to Twickenham to steal a sight of *her* again; and that it was the sight of her that made you resolve to wed no one else. And when I have railed against her for fickleness, have not you nearly frightened me out of my wits, as if no one might rail against her but yourself? And now she is free—and did you not grant that she would not refuse your hand, and would be true and faithful henceforth? And yet you insist on being—granite."

"No, Dick, not granite; I wish I were."

"Granite and pride," persisted Dick, courageously. "If one chips a bit off the granite, one only breaks one's spade against the pride."

"Pride—you too!" muttered Darrell, mournfully; then aloud, "No, it is not pride now, whatever it might have been even yesterday. But I would rather be racked by all the tortures that pious inquisitors ever invented out

of compassion for obstinate heretics, than condemn the woman I have so fatally loved to a penance the misery of which she cannot foresee. She would accept me?—certainly! Why? Because she thinks she owes me reparation—because she pities me. And my heart tells me that I might become cruel, and mean, and vindictive, if I were to live day by day with one who created in me, while my life was at noon, a love never known in its morn, and to feel that that love's sole return was the pity vouchsafed to the nightfall of my age. No; if she pitied, but did not love me, when, eighteen years ago, we parted under yonder beech-tree, I should be a dotard to dream that woman's pity mellows into love as our locks become grey, and Youth turns our vows into ridicule. It is not pride that speaks here; it is rather humility, Dick. But we must not now talk of old age and bygones. Youth and marriage-bells, Dick! Know that I have been for hours pondering how to reconcile with my old-fashioned notions dear Lionel's happiness. We must think of the living as well the dead, Dick. I have solved the problem. I am happy, and so shall the young folks be."

"You don't mean to say that you will consent to—"

"Yes, to Lionel's marriage with that beautiful girl, whose parentage we never will ask. Great men are their own ancestors; why not sometimes fair women? Enough —I consent! I shall of course secure to my kinsman and his bride an ample fortune. Lionel will have time for his honeymoon before he departs for the wars. He will fight with good heart now, Dick. Young folks of the present day cannot bear up against sorrow, as they were trained to do in mine. And that amiable lady who has so much pity for me, has, of course, still more pity for a charming young couple for whose marriage she schemed, in order to give me a home, Dick. And rather than she should pine and fall ill, and—no matter; all shall be settled as it should be for the happiness of the living. But something else must be settled; we must think of the dead as well as the living; and this name of Darrell shall be buried with me in the grave beside my father's. Lionel Haughton will keep to his own name. Live the Haughtons! Perish, but with no blot on their shield—perish the Darrells! Why, what is that? Tears, Dick? Pooh!—be a man! And I want all your strength; for you, too, must

have a share in the sacrifice. What follows is not the dictate of Pride, if I *can* read myself aright. No; it is the final completion and surrender of the object on which so much of my life has been wasted—but a surrender that satisfies my crochets of honour. At all events, if it be pride in disguise, it will demand no victim in others; you and I may have a sharp pang—we must bear it, Dick."

"What on earth is coming now?" said, Dick, dolefully.

"The due to the dead, Richard Fairthorn. This nook of fair England, in which I learned from the dead to love honour—this poor domain of Fawley—shall go in bequest to the College at which I was reared."

"Sir!"

"It will serve for a fellowship or two to honest, brave-hearted young scholars. It will be thus, while English institutions may last, devoted to Learning and Honour. It may sustain for mankind some ambition more generous than mine, it appears, ever was—settled thus, not in mine, but my dear father's name, like the Darrell Museum. These are my dues to the dead, Dick! And the old house thus becomes useless. The new house was ever a folly. They must go down both, as soon as the young folks are married;—not a stone stand on stone! The ploughshare shall pass over their sites! And this task I order you to see done. I have not strength. You will then hasten to join me at Sorrento, that corner of earth on which Horace wished to breathe his last sigh.

'Ille te mecum locus et beatæ
Postulant arces—ibi—tu— —'"

"Don't, sir, don't. Horace again! It is too much." Fairthorn was choking; but as if the idea presented to him was really too monstrous for belief, he clutched at Darrell with so uncertain and vehement a hand that he almost caught him by the throat, and sobbed out, "You must be joking."

"Seriously and solemnly, Richard Fairthorn," said Darrell, gently disentangling the fingers that threatened him with strangulation, "seriously and solemnly I have uttered to you my deliberate purpose. I implore you, in the name of our life-long friendship, to face this pain as I do—resolutely, cheerfully. I implore you to execute to the letter the instructions I shall leave with you on quitting

England, which I shall do the day Lionel is married; and then, dear old friend, calm days, clear consciences:—In climes where whole races have passed away—proud cities themselves sunk in graves—where our petty grief for a squirearch's lost house we shall both grow ashamed to indulge—there we will moralise, rail against vain dreams and idle pride, cultivate vines and orange trees, with Horace—nay, nay, Dick—with the FLUTE!"

CHAPTER V.

'More bounteous run rivers when the ice that locked their flow melts into their waters. And when fine natures relent, their kindness is swelled by the thaw.

DARRELL escaped into the house; Fairthorn sunk upon the ground, and resigned himself for some minutes to unmanly lamentations. Suddenly he started up; a thought came into his brain—a hope into his breast. He made a caper—launched himself into a precipitate zig-zag—gained the hall door—plunged into his own mysterious hiding-place—and in less than an hour re-emerged, a letter in his hand, with which he had just time to catch the postman, as that functionary was striding off from the back yard with the official bag.

This exploit performed, Fairthorn shambled into his chair at the dinner-table, as George Morley concluded the grace which preceded the meal that in Fairthorn's estimation usually made the grand event of the passing day. But the poor man's appetite was gone. As Sophy dined with Waife, the Morleys alone shared, with host and secretary, the melancholy entertainment. George was no less silent than Fairthorn; Darrell's manner perplexed him. Mrs. Morley, not admitted into her husband's confidence in secrets that concerned others, though in all his own he was to her conjugal sight *pellucidior vitro*, was the chief talker; and being the best woman in the world, ever wishing to say something pleasant, she fell to praising the dear old family pictures that scowled at her from the wall, and informed Fairthorn that she had made great progress with her sketch of the old house as seen from the lake, and was in doubt whether she should introduce in the foreground some figures of the olden time, as in Nash's Views

of Baronial Mansions. But not a word could she coax out of Fairthorn; and when she turned to appeal to Darrell, the host suddenly addressed to George a question as to the text and authorities by which the Papal Church defends its doctrine of Purgatory. That entailed a long, and no doubt, erudite reply, which lasted not only through the rest of the dinner, but till Mrs. Morley, edified by the discourse, and delighted to notice the undeviating attention which Darrell paid to her distinguished spouse, took advantage of the first full stop, and retired. Fairthorn finished his bottle of port, and, far from convinced that there was no Purgatory, but inclined to advance the novel heresy that Purgatory sometimes commenced on this side the grave—slinked away, and was seen no more that night; neither was his flute heard.

Then Darrell rose, and said, "I shall go up-stairs to our sick friend for a few minutes; may I find you here when I come back? Your visit to him can follow mine."

On entering Waife's room, Darrell went straight forward towards Sophy, and cut off her retreat.

"Fair guest," said he, with a grace and tenderness of manner which, when he pleased it, could be ineffably bewitching—"teach me some art by which in future rather to detain than to scare away the presence in which a duller age than mine could still recognise the charms that subdue the young." He led her back gently to the seat she had deserted—placed himself next to her—addressed a few cordial queries to Waife about his health and comforts—and then said, "You must not leave me for some days yet. I have written by this post to my kinsman, Lionel Haughton. I have refused to be his ambassador at a court in which, by all the laws of nations, he is bound to submit himself to his conqueror. I cannot even hope that he may escape with his freedom. No! chains for life! Thrice happy, indeed, if that be the merciful sentence you inflict."

He raised Sophy's hand to his lips as he ended, and before she could even quite comprehend the meaning of his words—so was she startled, confused, incredulous of such sudden change in fate—the door had closed on Darrell, and Waife had clasped her to his breast, murmuring, "Is not Providence kind?"

Darrell rejoined the scholar. "George," said he, "be kind enough to tell Alban that you showed me his letter

Be kind enough also to write to Lady Montfort, and say that I gratefully acknowledge her wish to repair to me those losses which have left me to face age and the grave alone. Tell her that her old friend (you remember, George, I knew her as a child) sees in that wish the same sweet goodness of heart which soothed him when his son died and his daughter fled. Add that her wish is gratified. To that marriage in which she compassionately foresaw the best solace left to my bereaved and baffled existence—to that marriage I give my consent."

"You do! Oh, Mr. Darrell, how I honour you!"

"Nay, I no more deserve honour for consenting than I should have deserved contempt if I had continued to refuse. To do what I deemed right is not more my wish now than it was twelve hours ago. To what so sudden a change of resolve in one who changes resolves very rarely, may be due, whether to Lady Montfort, to Alban, or to that metaphysical skill with which you wound into my reason, and compelled me to review all its judgments, I do not attempt to determine; yet I thought I had no option but the course I had taken. No; it is fair to yourself to give you the chief credit; you made me desire, you made me resolve, to find an option—I have found one. And now pay your visit where mine has been just paid. It will be three days, I suppose, before Lionel, having joined his new regiment at * * * * can be here. And then it will be weeks yet, I believe, before his regiment sails; and I'm all for short courtships."

CHAPTER VI.

Fairthorn frightens Sophy. Sir Isaac is invited by Darrell, and forms one of A Family Circle.

SUCH a sweet voice in singing breaks out from yon leafless beeches! Waife hears it at noon from his window. Hark! Sophy has found song once more.

She is seated on a garden bench, looking across the lake towards the gloomy old manor-house and the tall spectre palace beside it. Mrs. Morley is also on the bench, hard at work on her sketch; Fairthorn prowls through the thickets behind, wandering restless, and wretched, and wrathful beyond all words to describe. He hears that

voice singing; he stops short, perfectly rabid with indignation. "Singing," he muttered,—"singing in triumph, and glowering at the very House she dooms to destruction. Worse than Nero striking his lyre amidst the conflagration of Rome!"

By-and-by Sophy, who somehow or other cannot sit long in any place, and tires that day of any companion, wanders away from the lake, and comes right upon Fairthorn. Hailing, in her unutterable secret bliss, the musician who had so often joined her rambles in the days of unuttered secret sadness, she sprang towards him, with welcome and mirth in a face that would have lured Diogenes out of his tub. Fairthorn recoiled sidelong, growling forth, "Don't—you had better not!"—grinned the most savage grin, showing all his teeth like a wolf; and as she stood, mute with wonder, perhaps with fright, he slunk edgeways off, as if aware of his own murderous inclinations, turning his head more than once, and shaking it at her; then, with the wonted mystery which enveloped his exits, he was gone!—vanished behind a crag, or amidst a bush, or into a hole—heaven knows; but, like the lady in the Siege of Corinth, who warned the renegade Alp of his approaching end, he was "gone."

Twice again that day Sophy encountered the enraged musician; each time the same menacing aspect and weird disappearance.

"Is Mr. Fairthorn ever a little—odd?" asked Sophy timidly of George Morley.

"Always," answered George, dryly.

Sophy felt relieved at that reply. Whatever is habitual in a man's manner, however unpleasant, is seldom formidable. Still Sophy could not help saying—

"I wish poor Sir Isaac were here!"

"Do you?" said a soft voice behind her; "and pray, who is Sir Isaac?"

The speaker was Darrell, who had come forth with the resolute intent to see more of Sophy, and make himself as amiably social as he could. Guy Darrell could never be kind by halves.

"Sir Isaac is the wonderful dog you have heard me describe," replied George.

"Would he hurt my doe if he came here?" asked Darrell.

"Oh, no," cried Sophy; "he never hurts anything. He once found a wounded hare, and he brought it in his mouth to us so tenderly, and seemed so anxious that we should cure it, which grandfather did, and the hare would sometimes hurt him, but he never hurt the hare."

Said George sonorously,—

> "Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
> Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros."

Darrell drew Sophy's arm into his own. "Will you walk back to the lake with me," said he, "and help me to feed the swans? George, send your servant express for Sir Isaac. I am impatient to make his acquaintance."

Sophy's hand involuntarily pressed Darrell's arm. She looked up into his face with innocent, joyous gratitude; feeling at once, and as by magic, that her awe of him was gone.

Darrell and Sophy rambled thus together for more than an hour. He sought to draw out her mind, unaware to herself; he succeeded. He was struck with a certain simple poetry of thought which pervaded her ideas—not artificial sentimentality, but a natural tendency to detect in all life a something of delicate or beautiful which lies hid from the ordinary sense. He found, thanks to Lady Montfort, that, though far from learned, she was more acquainted with literature than he had supposed. And sometimes he changed colour, or breathed his short quick sigh when he recognised her familiarity with passages in his favourite authors which he himself had commended, or read aloud, to the Caroline of old.

The next day Waife, who seemed now recovered as by enchantment, walked forth with George, Darrell again with Sophy. Sir Isaac arrived—Immense joy; the doe butts Sir Isaac, who, retreating, stands on his hind legs, and having possessed himself of Waife's crutch, presents fire; the doe in her turn retreats;—half an hour afterwards doe and dog are friends.

Waife is induced, without much persuasion, to join the rest of the party at dinner. In the evening, all (Fairthorn excepted) draw round the fire. Waife is entreated by George to read a scene or two out of Shakespeare. He selects the latter portion of "King Lear." Darrell, who never was a playgoer, and who, to his shame be it said,

had looked very little into Shakespeare since he left college, was wonder-struck. He himself read beautifully—all great orators, I suppose, do; but his talent was not mimetic —not imitative; he could never have been an actor—never thrown himself into existences wholly alien or repugnant to his own. Grave or gay, stern or kind, Guy Darrell, though often varying, was always Guy Darrell.

But when Waife was once in that magical world of art, Waife was gone—nothing left of him;—the part lived as if there were no actor to it;—it *was* the Fool—it WAS Lear.

For the first time Darrell felt what a grand creature a grand actor really is—what a luminous, unconscious critic bringing out beauties of which no commentator ever dreamed! When the reading was over, talk still flowed; the gloomy old hearth knew the charm of a home circle. All started incredulous when the clock struck one. Just as Sophy was passing to the door, out from behind the window curtain glared a vindictive, spiteful eye. Fairthorn made a mow at her, which 'tis a pity Waife did not see—it would have been a study for Caliban. She uttered a little scream.

"What's the matter?" cried the host.

"Nothing," said she quickly—far too generous to betray the hostile oddities of the musician. "Sir Isaac was in my way—that was all."

"Another evening we must have Fairthorn's flute," said Darrell. "What a pity he was not here to-night!—he would have enjoyed such reading—no one more."

Said Mrs. Morley—"He was here once or twice during the evening; but he vanished!"

"Vanishing seems his forte," said George.

Darrell looked annoyed. It was his peculiarity to resent any jest, however slight, against an absent friend; and at that moment his heart was perhaps more warmed towards Dick Fairthorn than to any man living. If he had not determined to be as amiable and mild towards his guests as his nature would permit, probably George might have had the flip of a sarcasm which would have tingled for a month. But as it was, Darrell contented himself with saying gravely—

"No, George; Fairthorn's foible is vanishing; his forte is fidelity. If my fortune were to vanish, Fairthorn would

never disappear; and that's more than I would say if I were a King, and Fairthorn—a Bishop!"

After that extraordinary figure of speech, "Good-nights" were somewhat hastily exchanged; and Fairthorn was left behind the curtain with feelings towards all his master's guests as little, it is to be hoped, like those of a Christian Bishop towards his fellow-creatures, as they possibly could be.

CHAPTER VII.

"Domus et placens Uxor."

Fairthorn finds nothing *placens* in the *Uxor*, to whom *Domus* is indebted for its destruction.

Another day! Lionel is expected to arrive an hour or two after noon. Darrell is in his room—his will once more before him. He has drawn up a rough copy of the codicil by which Fawley is to pass away, and the name of Darrell be consigned to the care of grateful Learning, linked with prizes and fellowships;—a public property—lost for ever to private representatives of its sepulchred bearers. Preparations for departure from the doomed dwelling-house have begun. There are large boxes on the floor; and favourite volumes—chiefly in science or classics—lie piled beside them for selection.

What is really at the bottom of Guy Darrell's heart? Does he feel reconciled to his decision? Is the virtue of his new self-sacrifice in itself a consoling reward? Is that cordial urbanity, that cheerful kindness, by which he has been yet more endearing himself to his guests, sincere or assumed? As he throws aside his pen, and leans his cheek on his hand, the expression of his countenance may perhaps best answer those questions. It has more unmingled melancholy than was habitual to it before, even when in his gloomiest moods; but it is a melancholy much more soft and subdued; it is the melancholy of resignation—that of a man who has ceased a long struggle—paid his offering to the appeased Nemesis, in casting into the sea the thing that had been to him the dearest.

But in resignation, when complete, there is always a strange relief. Despite that melancholy, Darrell is less unhappy than he has been for years. He feels as if a sus-

pense had passed—a load been lifted from his breast. After all, he has secured, to the best of his judgment, the happiness of the living, and, in relinquishing the object to which his own life has been vainly devoted, and immolating the pride attached to it, he has yet, to use his own words, paid his "dues to the dead." No descendant from a Jasper Losely and a Gabrielle Desmarets will sit as mistress of the house in which Loyalty and Honour had garnered, with the wrecks of fortune, the memories of knightly fame—nor perpetuate the name of Darrell through children whose blood has a source in the sink of infamy and fraud. Nor was this consolation that of a culpable pride; it was bought by the abdication of a pride that had opposed its prejudices to living worth—to living happiness. Sophy would not be punished for sins not her own—Lionel not barred from a prize that earth never might replace. What mattered to them a mouldering, old, desolate manor-house—a few hundreds of pitiful acres? Their children would not be less blooming if their holiday summer-noons were not shaded by those darksome trees—nor less lively of wit, if their school themes were signed in the name, not of Darrell, but Haughton.

A slight nervous knock at the door. Darrell has summoned Fairthorn; Fairthorn enters. Darrell takes up a paper; it contains minute instructions as to the demolition of the two buildings. The materials of the new pile may be disposed of, sold, carted away—anyhow, anywhere. Those of the old house are sacred—not a brick to be carried from the precincts around it. No; from foundation to roof, all to be piously removed—to receive formal interment deep in the still bosom of the little lake, and the lake to be filled up and turfed over. The pictures and antiquities selected for the Darrell Museum are, of course, to be carefully transported to London—warehoused safely till the gift from owner to nation be legally ratified. The pictures and articles of less value will be sent to an auction. But when it came to the old family portraits in the manor-house, the old homely furniture, familiarised to sight and use and love from infancy, Darrell was at a loss; his invention failed. That question was reserved for farther consideration.

"And why," says Fairthorn, bluntly and coarsely, urging at least reprieve; "why, if it must be, not wait till

you are no more? Why must the old house be buried before you are?"

"Because," answered Darrell, "such an order, left by will, would seem a reproach to my heirs; it would wound Lionel to the quick. Done in my lifetime, and just after I have given my blessing on his marriage, I can suggest a thousand reasons for an old man's whim; and my manner alone will dispel all idea of a covert affront to his charming innocent bride."

"I wish she were hanged, with all my heart," muttered Fairthorn, "coming here to do such astonishing mischief! But, sir, I can't obey you; 'tis no use talking. You must get some one else. Parson Morley will do it—with pleasure too, no doubt; or that hobbling old man whom I suspect to be a conjuror. Who knows but what he may get knocked on the head as he is looking on with his wicked one eye; and then there will be an end of him, too, which would be a great satisfaction!"

"Pshaw, my dear Dick; there is no one else I can ask but you. The Parson would argue; I've had enough of his arguings; and the old man is the last whom my own arguings could deceive. *Fiat justitia.*"

"Don't, sir, don't; you are breaking my heart!—'tis a shame, sir," sobbed the poor faithful rebel.

"Well, Dick, then I must see it done myself; and you shall go on first to Sorrento, and hire some villa to suit us. I don't see why Lionel should not be married next week; then the house will be clear. And—yes—it *was* cowardly in me to shrink. Mine be the task. Shame on me to yield it to another. Go back to thy flute, Dick.

'Neque tibias
Euterpe cohibet, nec Polyhymnia
Lesboum refugit tendere barbiton!'"

At that last remorseless shaft from the Horatian quiver, "Venenatis gravina sagittis," Fairthorn could stand ground no longer; there was a shamble—a plunge—and once more the man was vanished.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Flute-player shows how little Music hath power to soothe the savage breast—of a Musician.

Fairthorn found himself on the very spot in which, more than five years ago, Lionel, stung by Fairthorn's own incontinent prickles, had been discovered by Darrell. There he threw himself on the ground, as the boy had done; there, like the boy, he brooded moodily, bitterly—sore with the world and himself. To that letter, written on the day that Darrell had so shocked him, and on which letter he had counted as a last forlorn-hope, no answer had been given. In an hour or so, Lionel would arrive; those hateful nuptials, dooming Fawley as the nuptials of Paris and Helen had doomed Troy, would be finally arranged. In another week the work of demolition would commence. He never meant to leave Darrell to superintend that work. No; grumble and refuse as he might till the last moment, he knew well enough that, when it came to the point, he, Richard Fairthorn, must endure any torture that could save Guy Darrell from a pang. A voice comes singing low through the grove—the patter of feet on the crisp leaves. He looks up; Sir Isaac is scrutinising him gravely—behind Sir Isaac, Darrell's own doe, led patiently by Sophy,—yes, lending its faithless neck to that female criminal's destroying hand. He could not bear that sight, which added insult to injury. He scrambled up—darted a kick at Sir Isaac—snatched the doe from the girl's hand, and looked her in the face (*her*—not Sophy, but the doe) with a reproach that, if the brute had not been lost to all sense of shame, would have cut her to the heart; then, turning to Sophy, he said, "No, Miss! I reared this creature—fed it with my own hands, Miss. I gave it up to Guy Darrell, Miss; and you sha'n't steal this from him, whatever else you may do, Miss."

Sophy.—"Indeed, Mr. Fairthorn, it was for Mr. Darrell's sake that I wished to make friends with the doe—as you would with poor Sir Isaac, if you would but try and like me—a little, only a very little, Mr. Fairthorn."

Fairthorn.—"Don't!"

Sophy.—"Don't what? I am so sorry to see I have annoyed you somehow. You have not been the same

person to me the last two or three days. Tell me what I have done wrong; scold me, but make it up."

FAIRTHORN.—"Don't hold out your hand to me! Don't be smiling in my face! I don't choose it! Get out of my sight! You are standing between me and the old house—robbing me even of my last looks at the home which you—"

SOPHY.—"Which I—what?"

FAIRTHORN.—"Don't, I say, don't—don't tempt me. You had better not ask questions—that's all. I shall tell you the truth; I know I shall; my tongue is itching to tell it. Please to walk on."

Despite the grotesque manner and astounding rudeness of the flute-player, his distress of mind was so evident—there was something so genuine and earnest at the bottom of his ludicrous anger—that Sophy began to feel a vague presentiment of evil. That she was the mysterious cause of some great suffering to this strange enemy, whom she had unconsciously provoked, was clear; and she said, therefore, with more gravity than she had before evinced—

"Mr. Fairthorn, tell me how I have incurred your displeasure. I entreat you to do so; no matter how painful the truth may be, it is due to us both not to conceal it."

A ray of hope darted through Fairthorn's enraged and bewildered mind. He looked to the right—he looked to the left; no one near. Releasing his hold on the doe, he made a sidelong dart towards Sophy, and said, "Hush; do you really care what becomes of Mr. Darrell?"

"To be sure I do."

"You would not wish him to die broken-hearted in a foreign land—that old house levelled to the ground, and buried in the lake? Eh, Miss—eh?"

"How can you ask me such questions?" said Sophy, faintly. "Do speak plainly, and at once."

"Well, I will, Miss. I believe you are a good young lady, after all—and don't wish really to bring disgrace upon all who want to keep you in the dark, and—"

"Disgrace!" interrupted Sophy; and her pure spirit rose, and the soft blue eye flashed a ray like a shooting-star.

"No, I am sure you would not like it; and some time or other you could not help knowing, and you would be

very sorry for it. And that boy Lionel, who was as proud as Guy Darrell himself when I saw him last (prouder, indeed)—that *he* should be so ungrateful to his benefactor! And, indeed, the day may come when he may turn round on you, or on the lame old gentleman, and say he has been disgraced. Should not wonder at all! Young folks, when they are sweethearting only talk about roses and angels, and such-like; but when husbands and wives fall out, as they always do sooner or later, they don't mince their words then, and they just take the sharpest thing that they can find at their tongue's end. So you may depend on it, my dear Miss, that some day or other that young Haughton will say, 'that you lost him the old manor-house and the old Darrell name,' and have been his disgrace; that's the very word, Miss; I have heard husbands and wives say it to each other over and over again."

Sophy.—"Oh, Mr. Fairthorn, Mr. Fairthorn! these horrid words cannot be meant for me. I will go to Mr. Darrell—I will ask him how I can be a dis——." Her lips could not force out the word.

Fairthorn.—"Ay; go to Mr. Darrell, if you please. He will deny it all; he will never speak to me again. I don't care—I am reckless. But it is not the less true that you make him an exile because you may make me a beggar."

Sophy (wringing her hands).—"Have you no mercy, Mr. Fairthorn? Will you not explain?"

Fairthorn.—"Yes, if you will promise to keep it secret at least for the next six months—anything for breathing-time."

Sophy (impatiently).—"I promise, I promise; speak, speak."

And then Fairthorn did speak! He did speak of Jasper Losely—his character—his debasement—even of his midnight visit to her host's chamber. He did speak of the child fraudulently sought to be thrust on Darrell—of Darrell's just indignation and loathing. The man was merciless; though he had not an idea of the anguish he was inflicting, he was venting his own anguish. All the mystery of her past life became clear at once to the unhappy girl—all that had been kept from her by protecting love. All her vague conjectures now became a dreadful certainty;—explained now why Lionel had fled her—why he had written that letter, over the contents of which she

had pondered, with her finger on her lip, as if to hush her own sighs—all, all! She marry Lionel now! impossible! She bring disgrace upon him in return for such generous, magnanimous affection! She drive his benefactor, her grandsire's vindicator, from his own hearth! She—she—that Sophy who, as a mere infant, had recoiled from the thought of playful subterfuge and tamperings with plain honest truth! She rose before Fairthorn had done; indeed, the tormentor, left to himself, would not have ceased till nightfall.

"Fear not, Mr. Fairthorn," she said, resolutely, Mr. Darrell will be no exile! his house will not be destroyed. Lionel Haughton shall not wed the child of disgrace! Fear not, sir; all is safe!"

She shed not a tear; nor was there writ on her countenance that CHANGE, speaking of blighted hope, which had passed over it at her young lover's melancholy farewell. No, now she was supported—now there was a virtue by the side of a sorrow—now love was to shelter and save the beloved from disgrace — from disgrace! At that thought, disgrace fell harmless from herself, as the rain from the plumes of a bird. She passed on, her cheek glowing, her form erect.

By the porch door she met Waife and the Morleys. With a kind of wild impetuosity she seized the old man's arm, and drew it fondly, clingingly within her own. Henceforth they, two, were to be, as in years gone by, all in all to each other. George Morley eyed her countenance in thoughtful surprise. Mrs. Morley, bent as usual on saying something seasonably kind, burst into an eulogium on her brilliant colour. So they passed on towards the garden side of the house. Wheels—the tramp of hoofs, full gallop; and George Morley, looking up, exclaimed, "Ha! here comes Lionel! and see, Darrell is hastening out to welcome him!"

CHAPTER IX.

The Letter on which Richard Fairthorn relied for the defeat of the conspiracy against Fawley Manor-house. Bad aspects for Houses. The House of Vipont is threatened. A Physician attempts to medicine to a mind diseased. A strange communication, which hurries the reader on to the next Chapter.

It has been said that Fairthorn had committed to a certain letter his last desperate hope that something might yet save Fawley from demolition, and himself and his master from an exile's home in that smiling nook of earth to which Horace invited Septimius, as uniting the advantages of a mild climate, excellent mutton, capital wine; and affording to Septimius the prospective privilege of sprinkling a tear over the cinder of his poetical friend while the cinder was yet warm; inducements which had no charm at all to Fairthorn, who was quite satisfied with the Fawley southdowns—held in just horror all wishy-washy light wines—and had no desire to see Darrell reduced to a cinder for the pleasure of sprinkling that cinder with a tear.

The letter in question was addressed to Lady Montfort. Unscrupulously violating the sacred confidence of his master, the treacherous wretch, after accusing her, in language little more consistent with the respect due to the fair sex than that which he had addressed to Sophy, of all the desolation that the perfidious nuptials of Caroline Lyndsay had brought upon Guy Darrell, declared that the least Lady Montfort could do to repair the wrongs inflicted by Caroline Lyndsay, was—not to pity his master!—that her pity was killing him. He repeated, with some grotesque comments of his own, but on the whole not inaccurately, what Darrell had said to him on the subject of her pity. He then informed her of Darrell's consent to Lionel's marriage with Sophy; in which criminal espousals it was clear, from Darrell's words, that Lady Montfort had had some nefarious share. In the most lugubrious colours he brought before her the consequences of that marriage—the extinguished name, the demolished dwelling-place, the renunciation of native soil itself. He called upon her, by all that was sacred, to contrive some means to undo the terrible mischief she had originally occasioned, and had recently helped to complete. His epistle ended by an

attempt to conciliate and coax. He revised the image of that wild Caroline Lyndsay, to whom HE had never refused a favour; whose earliest sums he had assisted to cast up—to whose young idea he had communicated the elementary principles of the musical gamut—to whom he had played on his flute, winter eve and summer noon, by the hour together; that Caroline Lyndsay who, when a mere child, had led Guy Darrell where she willed, as by a thread of silk. Ah, how Fairthorn had leapt for joy when, eighteen years ago, he had thought that Caroline Lyndsay was to be the sunshine and delight of the house to which she had lived to bring the cloud and the grief! And by all these memories, Fairthorn conjured her either to break off the marriage she had evidently helped to bring about, or, failing that, to convince Guy Darrell that he was not the object of her remorseful and affectionate compassion.

Caroline was almost beside herself at the receipt of this letter. The picture of Guy Darrell effacing his very life from his native land, and destroying the last memorials of his birthright and his home—the conviction of the influence she still retained over his bleak and solitary existence—the experience she had already acquired that the influence failed where she had so fondly hoped it might begin to repair and to bless, all overpowered her with emotions of yearning tenderness and unmitigated despair. What could she do? She could not offer herself, again to be rejected. She could not write again, to force her penitence upon the man who, while acknowledging his love to be unconquered, had so resolutely refused to see, in the woman who had once deceived his trust—the Caroline of old! Alas, if he were but under the delusion that her pity was the substitute, and not the companion of love, how could she undeceive him? How say—how write—"Accept me, for I love you." Caroline Montfort had no pride of rank, but she had pride of sex; that pride had been called forth, encouraged, strengthened, throughout all the years of her wedded life. For Guy Darrell's sake, and to him alone, that pride she had cast away — trampled upon; such humility was due to him. But when the humility had been once in vain, could it be repeated—would it not be debasement? In the first experiment she had but to bow to his reproach—in a second experiment she might have but to endure his contempt. Yet how, with her sweet,

earnest, affectionate nature—how she longed for one more interview—one more explanation! If chance could but bring it about; if she had but a pretext—a fair reason, apart from any interest of her own, to be in his presence once more! But in a few days he would have left England for ever—his heart yet more hardened in its resolves by the last sacrifice to what it had so sternly recognised to be a due to others. Never to see him more—never! to know how much in that sacrifice he was suffering now—would perhaps suffer more hereafter, in the reaction that follows all strain upon purpose—and yet not a word of comfort from her—her who felt born to be his comforter.

But this marriage, that cost him so much, must that be? Could she dare, even for his sake, to stand between two such fair young lives as those of Lionel and Sophy—confide to them what Fairthorn had declared—appeal to their generosity? She shrunk from inflicting such intolerable sorrow. Could it be her duty? In her inability to solve this last problem, she bethought herself of Alban Morley; here, at least, he might give advice—offer suggestion. She sent to his house, entreating him to call. Her messenger was some hours before he found the Colonel, and then brought back but a few hasty lines—"impossible to call that day. The CRISIS had come at last! The Country, the House of Vipont, the British Empire, were trembling in the balance. The Colonel was engaged every moment for the next twelve hours. He had the Earl of Montfort, who was intractable and stupid beyond conception, to see and talk over; Carr Vipont was hard at work on the materials for the new Cabinet—Alban was helping Carr Vipont. If the house of Vipont failed England at this moment, it would not be a CRISIS, but a CRASH! The Colonel hoped to arrange an interview with Lady Montfort for a minute or two the next day. But perhaps she would excuse him from a journey to Twickenham, and drive into town to see him; if not at home, he would leave word where he was to be found."

By the beard of Jupiter Capitolinus, there are often revolutions in the heart of a woman, during which she is callous to a CRISIS, and has not even a fear for a CRASH!

The next day came George's letter to Caroline, with the gentle message from Darrell; and when Dr. F——, whose apprehensions for the state of her health Colonel Morley

had by no means exaggerated, called in the afternoon to see the effect of his last prescription, he found her in such utter prostration of nerves and spirits, that he resolved to hazard a dose not much known to great ladies—viz. three grains of plain-speaking, with a minim of frightening.

"My dear lady," said he, "yours is a case in which physicians can be of very little use. There is something on the mind which my prescriptions fail to reach; worry of some sort—decidedly worry. And unless you yourself can either cure that, or will make head against it, worry, my dear Lady Montfort, will end, not in consumption—you are too finely formed to let worry eat holes in the lungs—no; but in a confirmed aneurism of the heart, and the first sudden shock might then be immediately fatal. The heart is a noble organ—bears a great deal—but still its endurance has limits. Heart-complaints are more common than they were;—over-education and over-civilisation, I suspect. Very young people are not so subject to them; they have flurry, not worry—a very different thing. A good chronic silent grief of some years' standing, that gets worried into acute inflammation at the age when feeling is no longer fancy, throws out a heart-disease which sometimes kills without warning, or sometimes, if the grief be removed, will rather prolong than shorten life, by inducing a prudent avoidance of worry in future. There is that worthy old gentleman who was taken so ill at Fawley, and about whom you were so anxious: in his case there had certainly been chronic grief; then came acute worry, and the heart could not get through its duties. Fifty years ago doctors would have cried 'apoplexy!'—now-a-days we know that the heart saves the head. Well, he was more easy in his mind the last time I saw him, and, thanks to his temperance, and his constitutional dislike to self-indulgence in worry, he may jog on to eighty, in spite of the stethoscope! Excess in the moral emotions gives heart-disease; abuse of the physical powers, paralysis;—both more common than they were—the first for your gentle sex, the second for our rough one. Both, too, lie in wait for their victims at the entrance into middle life. I have a very fine case of paralysis now; a man built up by nature to live to a hundred—never saw such a splendid formation—such bone and such muscle. I would have given Van Amburgh the two best of his lions, and my man

would have done for all three in five minutes. All the worse for him, my dear lady—all the worse for him. His strength leads him on to abuse the main fountains of life, and out jumps avenging Paralysis and fells him to earth with a blow. 'Tis your Hercules that Paralysis loves; she despises the weak invalid, who prudently shuns all excess. And so, my dear lady, that assassin called Aneurism lies in wait for the hearts that abuse their own force of emotion; sparing hearts that, less vital, are thrifty in waste and supply. But you are not listening to me! And yet my patient may not be quite unknown to your ladyship; for in happening to mention, the other day, to the lady who attends to and nurses him, that I could not call this morning, as I had a visit to pay to Lady Montfort at Twickenham, she became very anxious about you, and wrote this note, which she begged me to give you. She seems very much attached to my patient—not his wife nor his sister. She interests me;—capital nurse—cleverish woman too. Oh! here is the note."

Caroline, who had given but little heed to this recital, listlessly received the note—scarcely looked at the address—and was about to put it aside, when the good doctor, who was intent upon rousing her by any means, said, "No, my dear lady, I promised that I would see you read the note; besides, I am the most curious of men, and dying to know a little more who and what is the writer."

Caroline broke the seal and read as follows:—

"If Lady Montfort remembers Arabella Fossett, and will call at Clare Cottage, Vale of Health, Hampstead, at her ladyship's earliest leisure, and ask for Mrs. Crane, some information, not perhaps important to Lady Montfort, but very important to Mr. Darrell, will be given."

Lady Montfort startled the doctor by the alertness with which she sprang to her feet and rang the bell.

"What is it?" asked he.

"The carriage immediately," cried Lady Montfort as the servant entered.

"Ah! you are going to see the poor lady, Mrs. Crane, eh? Well, it is a charming drive, and just what I should have recommended. Any exertion will do you good. Allow me; why, your pulse is already fifty per cent.

better. Pray what relation is Mrs. Crane to my patient?"

"I really don't know; pray excuse me, my dear Dr. F——."

"Certainly; go while the day is fine. Wrap up;—a close carriage, mind;—and I will look in to-morrow."

CHAPTER X.

Wherein is insinuated the highest compliment to Woman ever paid to her sex by the Author of this work.

LADY MONTFORT has arrived at Clare Cottage. She is shown by Bridget Greggs into a small room upon the first floor; folding-doors to some other room closely shut—evidences of sickness in the house;—phials on the chimney-piece—a tray with a broth-basin on the table—a saucepan on the hob—the sofa one of those that serve as a bed, which Sleep little visits, for one who may watch through the night over some helpless sufferer—a woman's shawl thrown carelessly over its hard narrow bolster;—all, in short, betraying that pathetic untidiness and discomfort which says that a despot is in the house to whose will order and form are subordinate;—the imperious Tyranny of Disease establishing itself in a life that, within those four walls, has a value not to be measured by its worth to the world beyond. The more feeble and helpless the sufferer, the more sovereign the despotism—the more submissive the servitude.

In a minute or two one of the folding-doors silently opened and as silently closed, admitting into Lady Montfort's presence a grim woman in iron grey.

Caroline could not, at the first glance, recognise that Arabella Fossett, of whose handsome, if somewhat too strongly defined and sombre countenance, she had retained a faithful reminiscence. But Arabella had still the same imposing manner which had often repressed the gay spirits of her young pupil; and as she now motioned the great lady to a seat, and placed herself beside, an awed recollection of the schoolroom bowed Caroline's lovely head in mute respect.

MRS. CRANE.—"You too are changed since I saw you last,—that was more than five years ago, but you are not

less beautiful. *You* can still be loved;—*you* would not scare away the man whom you might desire to save. Sorrow has its partialities. Do you know that I have a cause to be grateful to you, without any merit of your own. In a very dark moment of my life—only vindictive and evil passions crowding on me—your face came across my sight. Goodness seemed there so beautiful—and, in this face, Evil looked so haggard! Do not interrupt me. I have but few minutes to spare you. Yes; at the sight of that face, gentle recollections rose up. You had ever been kind to me; and truthful, Caroline Lyndsay—truthful. Other thoughts came at the beam of that face, as other thoughts come when a strain of unexpected music reminds us of former days. I cannot tell how, but from that moment a something more like womanhood, than I had known for years, entered into my heart. Within that same hour I was sorely tried—galled to the quick of my soul. Had I not seen you before, I might have dreamed of nothing but a stern and dire revenge. And a purpose of revenge I *did* form. But it was not to destroy—it was to save! I resolved that the man who laughed to scorn the idea of vows due to me—vows to bind life to life—should yet sooner or later be as firmly mine as if he had kept his troth; that my troth at least should be kept to him, as if it had been uttered at the altar. Hush, did you hear a moan?—No! HE lies yonder, Caroline Lyndsay—mine, indeed, till the grave us do part. These hands have closed over him, and he rests in their clasp, helpless as an infant." Involuntarily Caroline recoiled. But looking into that careworn face, there was in it so wild a mixture of melancholy tenderness, with a resolved and fierce expression of triumph, that, more impressed by the tenderness than by the triumph, the woman sympathised with the woman; and Caroline again drew near, nearer than before, and in her deep soft eyes pity alone was seen. Into those eyes Arabella looked, as if spellbound, and the darker and sterner expression in her own face gradually relaxed and fled, and only the melancholy tenderness was left behind. She resumed:—

"I said to Guy Darrell that I would learn, if possible, whether the poor child whom I ill-used in my most wicked days, and whom you, it seems, have so benignly sheltered, was the daughter of Matilda—or, as he believed, of a yet more hateful mother. Long ago I had conceived a sus-

picion that there was some ground to doubt poor Jasper's assertion, for I had chanced to see two letters addressed to him—one from that Gabrielle Desmarets, whose influence over his life had been so baleful—in which she spoke of some guilty plunder with which she was coming to London, and invited him again to join his fortunes with her own. Oh, but the cold, bloodless villany of the tone!—the ease with which crimes for a gibbet were treated as topics for wit!" Arabella stopped—the same shudder came over her as when she had concluded the epistles abstracted from the dainty pocket-book. "But in the letter were also allusions to Sophy, to another attempt on Darrell to be made by Gabrielle herself. Nothing very clear; but a doubt did suggest itself—'Is she writing to him about his own child?' The other letter was from the French nurse with whom Sophy had been placed as an infant. It related to inquiries in person, and a visit to her own house, which Mr. Darrell had recently made; that letter also seemed to imply some deception, though but by a few dubious words. At that time the chief effect of the suspicion these letters caused was but to make me more bent on repairing to Sophy my cruelties to her childhood. What if I had been cruel to an infant who, after all, was not the daughter of that false, false Matilda Darrell! I kept in my memory the French nurse's address. I thought that when in France I might seek and question her. But I lived only for one absorbing end. Sophy was not then in danger; and even my suspicions as to her birth died away. Pass on:—Guy Darrell! Ah, Lady Montfort! his life has been embittered like mine; but he was man, and could bear it better. He has known, himself, the misery of broken faith, of betrayed affection, which he could pity so little when its blight fell on me; but you have excuse for desertion—you yourself were deceived; and I pardon him, for he pardoned Jasper, and we are fellow-sufferers. You weep! Pardon my rudeness. I did not mean to pain you. Try and listen calmly —I must hurry on. On leaving Mr. Darrell I crossed to France. I saw the nurse; I have ascertained the truth; here are the proofs in this packet. I came back—I saw Jasper Losely. He was on the eve of seeking you, whom he had already so wronged—of claiming the child, or rather of extorting money for the renunciation of a claim to one whom you had adopted. I told him how vainly he had

hitherto sought to fly from me. One by one I recited the guilty schemes in which I had baffled his purpose—all the dangers from which I had rescued his life. I commanded him to forbear the project he had then commenced. I told him I would frustrate that project as I had frustrated others. Alas, alas! why is this tongue so harsh?—why does this face so belie the idea of human kindness? I did but enrage and madden him; he felt but the reckless impulse to destroy the life that then stood between himself and the objects to which he had pledged his own self-destruction. I thought I should die by his hand. I did not quail. Ah! the ghastly change that came over his face—the one glance of amaze and superstitious horror; his arm obeyed him not; his strength, his limbs, forsook him; he fell at my feet—one side of him stricken dead! Hist! that is his voice—pardon me!" and Arabella flitted from the room, leaving the door ajar.

A feeble Voice, like the treble of an infirm old man, came painfully to Caroline's ear.

"I want to turn; help me. Why am I left alone? It is cruel to leave me so—cruel!"

In the softest tones to which that harsh voice *could* be tuned, the grim woman apologised and soothed.

"You gave me leave, Jasper dear. You said it would be a relief to you to have her pardon as well as theirs."

"Whose pardon?" asked the Voice querulously.

"Caroline Lyndsay's—Lady Montfort's."

"Nonsense! What did I ever do against her? Oh—ah! I remember now. Don't let me have it over again. Yes—she pardons me, I suppose! Get me my broth, and don't be long!"

Arabella came back, closing the door; and while she busied herself with that precious saucepan on the hob—to which the Marchioness of Montfort had become a very secondary object—she said, looking towards Caroline from under her iron-grey ringlets—

"You heard—*he misses me!* He can't bear me out of his sight now—me, me! You heard!"

Meekly Lady Montfort advanced, bringing in her hand the tray with the broth-basin.

"Yes, I heard! I must not keep you; but let me help while I stay."

So the broth was poured forth and prepared, and with it

Arabella disappeared. She returned in a few minutes, beckoned to Caroline, and said in a low voice—

"Come in—say you forgive him! Oh, you need not fear him; a babe could not fear him now!"

Caroline followed Arabella into the sick room. No untidiness there; all so carefully, thoughtfully arranged. A pleasant room too—with windows looking full on the sunniest side of the Vale of Health; the hearth so cheerily clear, swept so clean—the very ashes out of sight; flowers—costly exotics—on the table, on the mantelpiece; the couch drawn towards the window; and on that couch, in the gay rich dressing-gown of former days, warm coverlets heaped on the feet, snow-white pillows propping the head, lay what at first seemed a vague, undistinguishable mass—lay, what, as the step advanced, and the eye became more accurately searching, grew into Jasper Losely.

"Yes, there, too weak indeed for a babe to fear, lay all that was left of the Strong Man! No enemy but himself had brought him thus low—spendthrift, and swindler, and robber of his own priceless treasures—Health and Strength—those grand rent-rolls of joy which Nature had made his inheritance. As a tree that is crumbling to dust under the gnarls of its bark, seems, the moment ere it falls, proof against time and the tempest;—so, within all decayed, stood that image of strength—so, air scarcely stirring, it fell. "And the pitcher was broken at the fountain; and the wheel was broken at the cistern; vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher."

Jasper turned his dull eye towards Caroline, as she came softly to his side, and looked at her with a piteous gaze. The stroke that had shattered the form had spared the face; and illness and compulsory abstinence from habitual stimulants had taken from the aspect much of the coarseness—whether of shape or colour—that of late years had disfigured its outline—and supplied the delicacy which ends with youth by the delicacy that comes with the approach of death. So that, in no small degree, the beauty which had been to him so fatal a gift, was once more visible—the features growing again distinct, as wanness succeeded to the hues of intemperance, and emaciation to the bloated cheeks and swollen muscle. The goddess whose boons adorn the outward shell of the human spirit, came back to her favourite's death-couch as she had come to the cradle

—not now as the Venus Erycina, goddess of Smile and Jest, but as the warning Venus Libitina, the goddess of Doom and the Funeral.

"I'm a very poor creature," said Jasper, after a pause. "I can't rise—I can't move without help. Very strange! —supernatural! She always said that if I raised my hand against her, it would fall palsied!" He turned his eye towards Arabella, with a glare of angry terror. "She is a witch!" he said, and buried his face in the pillow. Tears rolled down the grim woman's cheek.

Lady Montfort.—"She is rather your good ministering spirit. Do not be unkind to her. Over her you have more power now than you had when you were well and strong. She lives but to serve you; command her gently."

Jasper was not proof against that sweet voice. With difficulty he wrenched himself round, and again looked long at Caroline Montfort, as if the sight did him good; then he made a sign to Arabella, who flew to his side and raised him.

"I have been a sad dog," he said, with a mournful attempt at the old rollicking tone,—"a very sad dog—in short, a villain! But all ladies are indulgent to villains—in fact, prefer them! Never knew a lady who could endure 'a good young man'—never! So I am sure you will forgive me, miss—ma'am. Who is this lady? When it comes to forgiveness, there are so many of them! Oh, I remember now—your ladyship will forgive me—'tis all down in black and white what I've done—Bella has it. You see *this* hand—I can write with this hand—this is not paralysed. This is not the hand I tried to raise against her. But *basta, basta!* where was I? My poor head! I know what it is to have a head now!—ache, ache!—boom, boom—weight, weight—heavy as a church bell—hollow as a church bell—noisy as a church bell! Brandy! give me brandy, you witch!—I mean Bella, good Bella, give me brandy!"

"Not yet, Jasper dear. You are to have it every third hour; it is not time yet, dearest; you must attend to the doctor, and try to get well and recover your strength. You remember I told you how kind Lady Montfort had been to your father, and you wished to see and thank her."

"My father—my poor, poor father! You've been kind to him! Bless you, bless you! And you will see him?

I want his pardon before I die. Don't forget, and—and—"

"Poor Sophy!" said Mrs. Crane.

"Ah yes! But she's well off now, you tell me. I can't think I have injured her. And really girls and women are intended to be a little useful to one. *Basta, basta!*"

"Mr. Darrell—"

"Yes, yes, yes! I forgive him, or he forgives me; settle it as you like. But my father's pardon, Lady Montfort, you will get me *that!*"

"I will, I will."

He looked at her again, and smiled. Arabella gently let his head fall back upon the pillow.

"Throw a handkerchief over my face," he said feebly, "and leave me; but be in call; I feel sleepy." His eyes closed; he seemed asleep even before they stole from the room.

"You will bring his father to him?" said Arabella, when she and Lady Montfort were again alone. "In this packet is Jasper's confession of the robbery for which that poor old man suffered. I never knew of that before. But you see how mild he is now!—how his heart is changed; it is indeed changed more than he shows; only you have seen him at the worst—his mind wanders a little to-day; it does sometimes. I have a favour to ask of you. I once heard a preacher, not many months ago; he affected me as no preacher ever did before. I was told that he was Colonel Morley's nephew. Will you ask Colonel Morley to persuade him to come to Jasper?"

"My cousin, George Morley! He shall come, I promise you; so shall your poor patient's forgiving father. Is there more I can do?"

"No. Explain to Mr. Darrell the reason why I have so long delayed sending to him the communication which he will find in the packet I have given to you, and which you will first open, reading the contents yourself—a part of them, at least, in Jasper's attestation of his stratagem to break off your marriage with Mr. Darrell, may yet be of some value to you—you had better also show the papers to Colonel Morley—he may complete the task. I had meant, on returning to England, or before seeing Mr. Darrell, to make the inquiries which you will see are still necessary. But then came this terrible affliction! I have been able to

think of nothing else but Jasper;—terrible to quit the house which contains him for an hour; only, when Dr. F. told me that he was attending you, that you were ill, and suffering, I resolved to add to this packet Jasper's own confession. Ah, and he gave it so readily, and went yesterday through the fatigue of writing with such good heart. I tell you that there is a change within him—there *is*—there *is*. Well, well—I resolved to give you the packet to transmit to Mr. Darrell, for somehow or other I connected your illness with your visit to him at Fawley!"

"My visit to Mr. Darrell!"

"Jasper saw you as your carriage drove from the park gate, not very many days since. Ah, you change colour! You have wronged that man; repair the wrong; you have the power!"

"Alas! no," murmured Caroline, "I have not the power."

"Pooh!—he loves you still. *You* are not one of those whom men forget."

Caroline was silent, but involuntarily she lowered her veil. In an instant the acute sense of the grim woman detected the truth.

"Ah! Pride—pride in both," she said. "I understand—I dare not blame *him* here. But you—you were the injurer; you have no right to pride; you will see him again."

"No—never—never!" faltered Caroline, with accents scarcely audible under her veil.

Arabella was silent for a moment, and Lady Montfort rose hastily to depart.

"You will see him again, I tell you;" and Arabella then, following her to the door—

"Stay; do you think HE will die?"

"Good heavens! Mr. Darrell!"

"No, no—Jasper Losely!"

"I hope not. What does Dr. F. say?"

"He will not tell me. But it is not the paralysis alone; he might recover from that—so young still. There are other symptoms; that dreadful habit of stimulants! He sinks if he has them not—they hasten death if he has. But—but—but—HE IS MINE, AND MINE ONLY, TO THE GRAVE NOW!"

CHAPTER XI.

The CRISIS—Public and Private.

LADY MONTFORT'S carriage stopped at Colonel Morley's door just as Carr Vipont was coming out. Carr, catching sight of her, bustled up to the carriage window.

"My dear Lady Montfort!—not seen you for an age! What times we live in! How suddenly THE CRISIS has come upon us! Sad loss in poor dear Montfort; no wonder you mourn for him! Had his failings, true—who is not mortal?—but always voted right; always to be relied on in times of CRISIS! But this crotchety fellow, who has so unluckily, for all but himself, walked into that property, is the loosest fish! And what is a House divided against itself? Never was the Constitution in such peril!—I say it deliberately!—and here is the Head of the Viponts humming and haaing, and asking whether Guy Darrell will join the Cabinet. And if Guy Darrell will not, we have no more chance of the Montfort interest than if we were Peep-o'-day Boys. But excuse me; I must be off; every moment is precious in times of CRISIS. Think, if we can't form a Cabinet by to-morrow night—only think what may happen; the other fellows will come in, and then—THE DELUGE!"

Carr is gone to find mops and Dame Partingtons to stave off the Deluge. Colonel Morley has obeyed Lady Montfort's summons, and has entered the carriage. Before she can speak, however, he has rushed into the subject of which he himself is full. "Only think—I knew it would be so when the moment came; all depends upon Guy Darrell; Montfort, who seems always in a fright lest a newspaper should fall on his head and crush him, says that if Darrell, whom he chooses to favour just because the newspapers do, declines to join, the newspapers will say the CRISIS is a job! Fancy!—a job—the CRISIS! Lord Mowbray de l'Arco and Sir Josiah Snodge, who are both necessary to a united government, but who unluckily detest each other, refuse to sit in the same Cabinet, unless Darrell sit between—to save them, I suppose, from the fate of the cats of Kilkenny. Sir John Cantly, our crack county member, declares that if Darrell does not come in, 'tis because the CRISIS is going too far! Harry Bold, our

most popular speaker, says, if Darrell stay out, 'tis a sign that the CRISIS is a retrograde movement! In short, without Darrell the CRISIS will be a failure, and the House of Vipont smashed—Lady Montfort—smashed! I sent a telegram (oh, that I should live to see such a word introduced into the English language!—but, as Carr says, what times these are!) to Fawley this morning, entreating Guy to come up to town at once. He answers by a line from Horace, which means, 'that he will see me shot first.' I must go down to him; only waiting to know the result of certain negotiations as to measures. I have but one hope. There *is* a measure which Darrell always privately advocated—which he thoroughly understands—which, placed in his hands, would be triumphantly carried; one of those measures, Lady Montfort, which, if defective, shipwreck a government; if framed, as Guy Darrell could frame it, immortalise the minister who concocts and carries them. This is all that Darrell needs to complete his fame and career. This is at length an occasion to secure a durable name in the history of his country; let him reject it, and I shall tell him frankly that his life has been but a brilliant failure. Since he has not a seat in Parliament, and usage requires the actual possession of that qualification for a seat in the Cabinet, we must lose his voice in the Commons. But we can arrange that; for if Darrell will but join the government, and go to the Lords, Sir Josiah Snodge, who has a great deal of voice and a great deal of jealousy, will join too—head the Vipont interest in the Commons—and speak to the country—speak every night—and all night, too, if required. Yes; Darrell must take the peerage—devote himself for a year or two to this great measure—to the consolidation of his fame—to the redemption of the House of Vipont—and to the Salvation of the Empire; and then, if he please, 'solve senescentem'—that is, he may retire from harness, and browse upon laurels for the rest of his days!"

Colonel Morley delivered himself of this long address without interruption from a listener interested in every word that related to Guy Darrell, and in every hope that could reunite him to the healthful activities of life.

It was now Lady Montfort's turn to speak; though, after subjects so momentous as the CRISIS and its speculative consequences, private affairs, relating to a poor little girl

like Sophy—nay, the mere private affairs of Darrell himself, seemed a pitiful bathos. Lady Montfort, however, after a few words of womanly comment upon the only part of the Colonel's discourse which touched her heart, hastened on to describe her interview with Arabella, and the melancholy condition of Darrell's once formidable son-in-law. For that last, the Colonel evinced no more compassionate feeling than any true Englishman, at the time I am writing, would demonstrate for a murderous Sepoy tied to the mouth of a cannon.

"A very good riddance," said the Colonel, dryly. "Great relief to Darrell, and to every one else whom that monster tormented and preyed on; and with his life will vanish the only remaining obstacle in righting poor Willy's good name. I hope to live to collect, from all parts of the country, Willy's old friends, and give them a supper, at which I suppose I must not get drunk; though I should rather like it, than not! But I interrupt you! go on."

Lady Montfort proceeded to state the substance of the papers she had perused in reference to the mystery which had been the cause of so much disquietude and bitterness.

The Colonel stretched out his hand eagerly for the documents thus quoted. He hurried his eye rapidly over the contents of the first paper he lit on, and then said, pulling out his watch, "Well, I have half an hour yet to spare in discussing these matters with you—may I order your coachman to drive round the Regent's Park?—better than keeping it thus at my door,—with four old maids for opposite neighbours." The order was given, and the Colonel again returned to the papers. Suddenly he looked up—looked full into Lady Montfort's face, with a thoughtful, searching gaze, which made her drop her own eyes; and she saw that he had been reading Jasper's confession, relating to his device for breaking off her engagement to Darrell, which in her hurry and excitement she had neglected to abstract from the other documents. "Oh, not that paper—you are not to read that," she cried, quickly covering the writing with her hand.

"Too late, my dear cousin. I have read it. All is now clear. Lionel was right; and I was right too, in my convictions, though Darrell put so coolly aside my questions when I was last at Fawley. I am justified now in all the pains I took to secure Lionel's marriage—in the cunning

cruelty of my letter to George! Know, Lady Montfort, that if Lionel had sacrificed his happiness to respect for Guy's ancestor-worship, Guy Darrell would have held himself bound in honour never to marry again. He told me so—told me he should be a cheat if he took any step to rob one from whom he had exacted such an offering—of the name, and the heritage for which the offering had been made. And I then resolved that County Guy should not thus irrevocably shut the door on his own happiness! Lady Montfort, you know that this man loves you—as, verily, I believe, never other man in our cold century loved woman;—through desertion—through change—amidst grief—amidst resentment—despite pride;—dead to all other love—shrinking from all other ties—on, constant on—carrying in the depth of his soul to the verge of age, secret and locked up, the hopeless passion of his manhood. Do you not see that it is through you, and you alone, that Guy Darrell has for seventeen years been lost to the country he was intended to serve and to adorn? Do you not feel that if he now reject this last opportunity to redeem years so wasted, and achieve a fame that may indeed link his Ancestral Name to the honours of Posterity, you, and you alone, are the cause?"

"Alas—alas—but what can I do?"

"Do!—ay, true. The poor fellow is old now; you cannot care for him!—you still young, and so unluckily beautiful!—you, for whom young princes might vie. True; you can have no feeling for Guy Darrell, except pity!"

"*Pity!* I hate the word!" cried Lady Montfort, with as much petulance as if she had still been the wayward lively Caroline of old.

Again the Man of the World directed towards her face his shrewd eyes, and dropped out, "See him!"

"But I have seen him. You remember I went to plead for Lionel and Sophy—in vain!"

"Not in vain. George writes me word that he has informed you of Darrell's consent to their marriage. And I am much mistaken if his greatest consolation in the pang that consent must have cost him, be not the thought that it relieves you from the sorrow and remorse his refusal had occasioned to you. Ah! there is but one person who can restore Darrell to the world—and that is yourself!"

Lady Montfort shook her head drearily.

"If I had but an excuse—with dignity—with self-respect—to—to—"

"An excuse! You have an absolute necessity to communicate with Darrell. You have to give to him these documents—to explain how you came by them. Sophy is with him; you are bound to see her on a subject of such vital importance to herself. Scruples of prudery! You, Caroline Lyndsay, the friend of his daughter—you whose childhood was reared in his very house—you whose mother owed to him such obligations—you to scruple in being the first to acquaint him with information affecting him so nearly! And why, forsooth? Because, ages ago, your hand was, it seems, engaged to him, and you were deceived by false appearances, like a silly young girl as you were."

Again Lady Montfort shook her head drearily—drearily.

"Well," said the Colonel, changing his tone, "I will grant that those former ties can't be renewed now. The man now is as old as the hills, and you had no right to expect that he would have suffered so much at being very naturally jilted for a handsome young Marquess."

"Cease, sir, cease," cried Caroline, angrily. The Colonel coolly persisted.

"I see now that such nuptials are out of the question. But has the world come to such a pass that one can never at any age have a friend in a lady unless she marry him? Scruple to accompany me—me your cousin—me your nearest surviving relation—in order to take back the young lady you have virtually adopted!—scruple to trust yourself for half an hour to that tumbledown old Fawley! Are you afraid that the gossips will say you, the Marchionness of Montfort, are running after a gloomy old widower, and scheming to be mistress of a mansion more like a ghost-trap than a residence for civilised beings? Or are you afraid that Guy Darrell will be fool and fop enough to think you are come to force on him your hand? Pooh, pooh! Such scruples would be in place if you were a portionless forward girl, or if he were a conceited young puppy, or even a suspicious old *roué*. But Guy Darrell—a man of his station, his character, his years! And you, cousin Caroline, what are you? Surely, lifted above all such pitiful crotchets by a rank amongst the loftiest gentlewomen of England; ample fortune, a beauty that in itself is rank and wealth; and, above all, a character that has

passed with such venerated purity through an ordeal in which every eye seeks a spot, every ear invites a scandal. But as you will. All I say is, that Darrell's future may be in your hands; that after to-morrow, the occasion to give at least noble occupation and lasting renown to a mind that is devouring itself and stifling its genius, may be irrevocably lost; and that I do believe, if you said to-morrow to Guy Darrell, 'You refused to hear me when I pleaded for what you thought a disgrace to your name, and yet even *that* you at last conceded to the voice of affection as if of duty—now hear me when I plead by the side of your oldest friend on behalf of your honour, and in the name of your forefathers,'—if YOU say THAT, he is won to his country. You will have repaired a wrong; and, pray, will you have compromised your dignity?"

Caroline had recoiled into the corner of the carriage, her mantle close drawn round her breast, her veil lowered; but no sheltering garb or veil could conceal her agitation.

The Colonel pull the check-string. "Nothing so natural; you are the widow of the Head of the House of Vipont. You are, or ought to be, deeply interested in its fate. An awful CRISIS, long expected, has occurred. The House trembles. A connection of that House can render it an invaluable service; that connection is the man at whose hearth your childhood was reared; and you go with me—me, who am known to be moving heaven and earth for every vote that the House can secure, to canvass this wavering connection for his support and assistance. Nothing, I say, so natural; and yet you scruple to serve the House of Vipont—to save your country! You may well be agitated. I leave you to your own reflections. My time runs short; I will get out here. Trust me with these documents. I will see to the rest of this long painful subject. I will send a special report to you this evening, and you will reply by a single line to the prayer I have ventured to address to you."

CHAPTER XII.

AND LAST.

In which the Author endeavours, to the best of his ability, to give a final reply to the question, "What will he do with it?"

SCENE—The banks of the lake at Fawley. George is lending his arm to Waife; Mrs. Morley seated on her camp-stool at the opposite side of the water, is putting the last touch to her sketch of the manor-house; Sir Isaac, reclined, is gravely contemplating the swans; the doe bending over him, occasionally nibbles his ear; Fairthorn has uncomfortably edged himself into an angle of the building, between two buttresses, and is watching, with malignant eye, two young forms, at a distance, as they move slowly yonder, side by side, yet apart, now lost, now emerging, through the gaps between melancholy leafless trees. Darrell, having just quitted Waife and George, to whose slow pace he can ill time his impatient steps, wonders why Lionel, whom, on arriving, he had, with brief cordial words, referred to Sophy for his fate, has taken more than an hour to ask a simple question, to which the reply may be pretty well known beforehand. He advances towards those melancholy trees. Suddenly one young form leaves the other—comes with rapid stride through the withered fern. Pale as death, Lionel seizes Guy Darrell's hand with convulsive grasp, and says, "I must leave you, sir. God bless you! All is over. I was the blindest fool—she refuses me."

"Refuses you!—impossible! For what reason?"

"She cannot love me well enough to marry," answered Lionel, with a quivering lip, and an attempt at that irony in which all extreme anquish, at least in our haughty sex, delights to seek refuge or disguise. "Likes me as a friend, a brother, and so forth, but nothing more. All a mistake, sir—all, except your marvellous kindness to me—to her—for which Heaven ever bless you."

"Yes, all a mistake of your own, foolish boy," said Darrell, tenderly; and, turning sharp, he saw Sophy hastening by, quickly and firmly, with her eyes looking straightward—on into space. He threw himself in her path.

"Tell this dull kinsman of mine, that 'faint heart never

won fair lady.' You do not mean seriously, deliberately, to reject a heart that will never be faint with a meaner fear than that of losing you?"

Poor Sophy! She kept her blue eyes still on the cold grey space, and answered by some scarce audible words—words which in every age girls intending to say No, seem to learn as birds learn their song; no one knows who taught them, but they are ever to the same tune. "'Sensible of the honour"—"Grateful"—"Some one more worthy," &c. &c.

Darrell checked this embarrassed jargon. "My question, young lady, is solemn; it involves the destiny of two lives. Do you mean to say that you do not love Lionel Haughton well enough to give him your hand, and return the true faith which is pledged with his own?"

"Yes," said Lionel, who had gained the side of his kinsman, "yes, that is it. Oh Sophy—Ay or No?"

"No!" fell from her pale, firm lips—and in a moment more she was at Waife's side, and had drawn him away from George. "Grandfather, grandfather!—home, home; let us go home at once, or I shall die!"

Darrell has kept his keen sight upon her movements—upon her countenance. He sees her gesture—her look—as she now clings to her grandfather. The blue eyes are not now coldly fixed on level air, but raised upward as for strength from above. The young face is sublime with its woe, and with its resolve.

"Noble child," muttered Darrell, "I think I see into her heart. If so, poor Lionel, indeed! *My* pride has yielded, hers never will!"

Lionel, meanwhile, kept beating his foot on the ground, and checking indignantly the tears that sought to gather to his eyes. Darrell threw his arm round the young man's shoulder, and led him gently, slowly away, by the barbed thorn-tree—on by the moss-grown crags.

Waife, meanwhile, is bending his ear to Sophy's lip. The detestable Fairthorn emerges from between the buttresses, and shambles up to George, thirsting to hear his hopes confirmed, and turning his face back to smile congratulation on the gloomy old house that he thinks he has saved from the lake.

Sophy has at last convinced Waife that his senses do not deceive him, nor hers wander. She has said, "O grand-

father, let us ever henceforth be all in all to each other. You are not ashamed of me—I am so proud of you. But there are others akin to me, grandfather, whom we will not mention; and you would be ashamed of me if I brought disgrace on one who would confide to me his name, his honour: and should I be as proud of you, if you asked me to do it?"

At these words Waife understands all, and he has not an argument in reply; and he suffers Sophy to lead him towards the house. Yes, they will go hence—yes, there shall be no schemes of marriage! They had nearly reached the door, when the door itself opened violently, and a man rushing forth caught Sophy in his arms, and kissed her forehead, her cheek, with a heartiness that it is well Lionel did not witness! Speechless and breathless with resentment, Sophy struggled, and in vain, when Waife, seizing the man by the collar, swung him away with a "How dare you, sir," that was echoed back from the hillocks—summoned Sir Isaac at full gallop from the lake—scared Fairthorn back to his buttresses—roused Mrs. Morley from her sketch—and, smiting the ears of Lionel and Darrell, hurried them, mechanically as it were, to the spot from which that thunder-roll had pealed.

"How dare I?" said the man, resettling the flow of his disordered coat—"How dare I kiss my own niece?—my own sister's orphan child? Venerable Bandit, I have a much better right than you have. Oh my dear injured Sophy, to think that I was ashamed of your poor cotton print—to think that to your pretty face I have been owing fame and fortune—and you, you wandering over the world—child of the sister of whose beauty I was so proud—of her for whom, alas, in vain! I painted Watteaus and Greuzes upon screens and fans!" Again he clasped her to his breast; and Waife this time stood mute, and Sophy passive—for the man's tears were raining upon her face, and washed away every blush of shame as to the kiss they hallowed.

"But where is my old friend William Losely?—where is Willy?" said another voice, as a tall, thin personage stepped out from the hall, and looked poor Waife unconsciously in the face.

"Alban Morley!" faltered Waife, "*you* are but little changed!"

The Colonel looked again, and in the elderly, lame, one-eyed, sober-looking man, recognised the wild jovial Willy, who had tamed the most unruly fillies, taken the most frantic leaps, carolled forth the blithest song—madcap, good-fellow, frolicsome, childlike darling of gay and grave, young and old!

> "'Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume,
> Labuntur anni,'"

said the Colonel, insensibly imbibing one of those Horatian particles that were ever floating in that classic atmosphere—to Darrell medicinal, to Fairthorn morbific. "Years slide away, Willy, mutely as birds skim through air; but when friend meets with friend after absence, each sees the print of their crows' feet on the face of the other. But we are not too old yet, Willy, for many a meet at the fireside! Nothing else in our studs, we can still mount our hobbies; and thorough-bred hobbies contrive to be in at the death. But you are waiting to learn by what title and name this stranger lays claim to so peerless a niece. Know then—Ah, here comes Darrell. Guy Darrell, in this young lady you will welcome the grandchild of Sidney Branthwaite, our old Eton school friend, a gentleman of as good blood as any in the land!"

"None better," cried Fairthorn, who had sidled himself into the group; "there's a note on the Branthwaite genealogy, sir, in your father's great work upon 'Monumental Brasses.'"

"Permit me to conclude, Mr. Fairthorn," resumed the Colonel; "Monumental Brasses are painful subjects. Yes Darrell, yes Lionel; this fair creature, whom Lady Montfort might well desire to adopt, is the daughter of Arthur Branthwaite, by marriage with the sister of Frank Vance, whose name I shrewdly suspect nations will prize, and whose works princes will hoard, when many a long genealogy, all blazoned in azure and *or*, will have left not a scrap for the moths."

"Ah!" murmured Lionel, "was it not I, Sophy, who taught you to love your father's genius! Do you not remember how, as we bent over his volume, it seemed to translate to us our own feelings?—to draw us nearer together? He was speaking to us from his grave."

Sophy made no answer; her face was hidden on the breast of the old man, to whom she still clung closer and closer.

"Is it so? Is it certain? Is there no doubt that she is the child of these honoured parents?" asked Waife tremulously.

"None," answered Alban; "we bring with us proofs that will clear up all my story."

The old man bowed his head over Sophy's fair locks for a moment; then raised it, serene and dignified: "You are mine for a moment yet, Sophy," said he.

"Yours as ever—more fondly, gratefully than ever," cried Sophy.

"There is but one man to whom I can willingly yield you. Son of Charles Haughton, take my treasure."

"I consent to that," cried Vance, "though I am put aside like a Remorseless Baron. And, Lionello mio, if Frank Vance is a miser, so much the better for his niece."

"But," faltered Lionel.

Oh, falter not. Look into those eyes; read that blush now! She looks coy, not reluctant. She bends before him—adorned as for love, by all her native graces. Air seems brightened by her bloom. No more the Outlaw-Child of Ignominy and Fraud, but the Starry Daughter of POETRY AND ART! Lo, where they glide away under the leafless, melancholy trees. Leafless and melancholy; No! Verdure and blossom and the smile of spring are upon every bough!

"I suppose," said Alban, "it will not now break Lionel's heart to learn that not an hour before I left London, I heard from a friend at the Horse Guards that it has been resolved to substitute the —— regiment for Lionel's; and it will be for some time yet, I suspect, that he must submit to be ingloriously happy. Come this way George, a word in your ear." And Alban, drawing his nephew aside, told him of Jasper's state, and of Arabella's request. "Not a word to-day, on these mournful topics, to poor Willy. To-day let nothing add to his pain to have lost a grandchild, or dim his consolation in the happiness and security his Sophy gains in that loss. But to-morrow you will go and see the stricken-down sinner, and prepare the father for the worst. I made a point of seeing Dr. F. last night. He gives Jasper but a few weeks. He compares him to a

mountain, not merely shattered by an earthquake, but burned out by its own inward fires."

"A few weeks only," sighed George. "Well, Time, that seems everything to man, has not even an existence in the sight of God. To that old man I owe the power of speech to argue, to exhort, and to comfort;—*he was training me to kneel by the deathbed of his son!*"

"You believe," asked the Man of the World, "in the efficacy of a deathbed repentance, when a sinner has sinned till the power of sinning be gone?"

"I believe," replied the Preacher, "that in health there is nothing so unsafe as trust in a deathbed repentance; I believe that on the deathbed, it cannot be unsafe to repent!"

Alban looked thoughtful, and George turned to rejoin Waife, to whom Vance was narrating the discovery of Sophy's parentage; while Fairthorn, as he listened, drew his flute from his pocket, and began screwing it, impatient to vent in delicate music what he never could have set into words for his blundering, untunable tongue. The Colonel joins Darrell, and hastens to unfold more fully the story which Vance is reciting to Waife.

Brief as it can, be the explanation due to the reader.

Vance's sister had died in child-birth. The poor young poet, unfitted to cope with penury, his sensitive nature combined with a frame that could feebly resist the strain of exhausting emotions, disappointed in fame, despairing of fortune, dependent for bread on his wife's boyish brother, and harassed by petty debts in a foreign land, had been fast pining away, even before an affliction to which all the rest seemed as nought. With that affliction he broke down at once, and died a few days after his wife, leaving an infant not a week old. A French female singer, of some repute in the theatres, and making a provincial tour, was lodging in the same house as the young couple. She had that compassionate heart which is more common than prudence or very strict principle with the tribes who desert the prosaic true world for the light sparkling false one. She had assisted the young couple, in their later days, with purse and kind offices; had been present at the birth of the infant—the death of the mother; and had promised Arthur Branthwaite that she would take care of his child, until she could safely convey it to his wife's relations;

while he wept to own that they, poor as himself, must regard such a charge as a burthen.

The singer wrote to apprise Mrs. Vance of the death of her daughter and son-in-law, and the birth of the infant whom she undertook shortly to send to England. But the babe, whom meanwhile she took to herself, got hold of her affections; with that yearning for children which makes so remarkable and almost uniform a characteristic of French women (if themselves childless) in the wandering Bohemian class that separates them from the ordinary household affections never dead in the heart of woman till womanhood itself be dead, the singer clung to the orphan little one to whom she was for the moment rendering the cares of a mother. She could not bear to part with it; she resolved to adopt it as her own. The knowledge of Mrs. Vance's circumstances—the idea that the orphan, to herself a blessing, would be an unwelcome encumbrance to its own relations—removed every scruple from a mind unaccustomed to suffer reflection to stand in the way of an impulse. She wrote word to Mrs. Vance that the child was dead. She trusted that her letter would suffice, without other evidence, to relations so poor, and who could have no suspicion of any interest to deceive them. Her trust was well founded. Mrs. Vance and the boy Frank, whose full confidence and gratitude had been already secured to their correspondent for her kind offices to the young parents, accepted, without a demur or a question, the news that the infant was no more. The singer moved on to the next town at which she was professionally engaged. The infant, hitherto brought up by hand, became ailing. The medical adviser called in, recommended the natural food, and found, in a village close by, the nurse to whom a little time before Jasper Losely had consigned his own daughter. The latter died; the nurse then removed to Paris to reside with the singer, who had obtained a lucrative appointment at one of the metropolitan theatres. In less than two years the singer herself fell a victim to a prevailing epidemic. She had lived without thought of the morrow; her debts exceeded her means; her effects were sold. The nurse, who had meanwhile become a widow, came for advice and refuge to her sister, who was in the service of Gabrielle Desmarets. Gabrielle being naturally appealed to, saw the infant, heard the story,

looked into the statement which, by way of confession, the singer had drawn up, and signed, in a notary's presence, before she died; looked into the letters from Mrs. Vance, and the schoolboy scrawls from Frank, both to the singer and to the child's parents, which the actress had carefully preserved; convinced herself of the poverty and obscurity of the infant's natural guardians and next of kin; and said to Jasper, who was just dissipating the fortune handed over to him as survivor of his wife and child, "There is what, if well-managed, may retain your hold on a rich father-in-law, when all else has failed. You have but to say that this infant is his grandchild; the nurse we can easily bribe, or persuade to confirm the tale. I, whom he already knows as that respectable baroness, your Matilda's friend, can give to the story some probable touches. The lone childless man must rejoice to think that a tie is left to him. The infant is exquisitely pretty; her face will plead for her. His heart will favour the idea too much to make him very rigorous in his investigations. Take the infant. Doubtless in your own country you can find some one to rear it at little or no expense, until the time come for appeal to your father-in-law, when no other claim on his purse remains."

Jasper assented with the *insoucient* docility by which he always acknowledged Gabrielle's astuter intellect. He saw the nurse; it was clear that she had nothing to gain by taking the child to English relations so poor. They might refuse to believe her, and certainly could not reward. To rid herself of the infant, and obtain the means to return to her native village with a few hundred francs in her purse, there was no promise she was not willing to make, no story she was too honest to tell, no paper she was too timid to sign. Jasper was going to London on some adventure of his own. He took the infant—chanced on Arabella—the reader knows the rest. The indifference ever manifested by Jasper to a child not his own—the hardness with which he had contemplated and planned his father's separation from one whom he had imposed by false pretexts on the old man's love, and whom he only regarded as an alien encumbrance upon the scanty means of her deluded protector—the fitful and desultory mode in which, when (contrary to the reasonings which Gabrielle had based upon a very large experience of the credulities of human nature in

general, but in utter ignorance of the nature peculiar to Darrell) his first attempt at imposition had been so scornfully resisted by his indignant father-in-law, he had played fast and loose with a means of extortion which, though loth to abandon, he knew would not bear any strict investigation;—all this is now clear to the reader. And the reader will also comprehend why, partly from fear that his father might betray him, partly from a compassionate unwillingness to deprive the old man of a belief in which William Losely said he had found such solace, Jasper, in his last interview with his father, shrank from saying, "but she is not your grandchild!" The idea of recurring to the true relations of the child naturally never entered into Jasper's brain. He considered them to be as poor as himself. *They* buy from him the child of parents, whom they had evidently, by their letters, taxed themselves to the utmost, and in vain, to save from absolute want! So wild seemed the notion, that he had long since forgotten that relations so useless existed. Fortunately the Nurse had preserved the written statement of the singer—the letters by Mrs. Vance and Frank—the certificate of the infant's birth and baptism—some poor relics of Sophy's ill-fated parents—manuscripts of Arthur's poems—baby-caps with initials and armorial crests, wrought, before her confinement, by the young wife—all of which had been consigned by the singer to the nurse, and which the nurse willingly disposed of to Mrs. Crane, with her own formal deposition of the facts, confirmed by her sister. Gabrielle's old confidential attendant, and who, more favoured than her mistress, was living peacefully in the rural scenes of her earlier innocence, upon the interest of the gains she had saved in no innocent service — confirmed yet more by references to many whose testimonies could trace, step by step, the child's record from its birth to its transfer to Jasper, and by the brief but distinct avowal, in tremulous lines, writ by Jasper himself. As a skein crossed and tangled, when the last knot is loosened, slips suddenly free, so this long bewildering mystery now became clear as a commonplace! What years of suffering Darrell might have been saved had he himself seen and examined the nurse—had his inquiry been less bounded by the fears of his pride—had the great lawyer not had himself for a client!

Darrell silently returned to Alban Morley the papers over which he had cast his eye as they walked slowly to and fro the sloping banks of the lake.

"It is well," said he, glancing fondly, as Fairthorn had glanced before him, towards the old House, now freed from doom, and permitted to last its time. "It is well," he repeated, looking away towards that part of the landscape where he could just catch a glimpse of Sophy's light form beyond the barbed thorn-tree; "it is well," he repeated thrice with a sigh. "Poor human nature! Alban, can you conceive it? I, who once so dreaded that that poor child should prove to be of my blood, now in knowing that she is not, feel a void, a loss! To Lionel I am so distant a kinsman!—to his wife, to his children, what can I be? A rich old man; the sooner he is in his grave the better. A few tears, and then the will! But, as your nephew says, 'This life is but a school;' the newcomer in the last form thinks the head-boy just leaving so old! And to us, looking back, it seems but the same yesterday whether we were the last comer or the head-boy."

"I thought," said Alban, plaintively, "that, for a short time at least, I had done with 'painful subjects.' You revel in them! County Guy, you have not left school yet; leave it with credit; win the best prize." And Alban plunged at once into THE CRISIS. He grew eloquent; the Party, the Country, the Great Measure to be intrusted to Darrell, if he would but undertake it as a member of the Cabinet; the Peerage, the House of Vipont, and immortal glory!—eloquent as Ulysses haranguing the son of Peleus in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Darrell listened coldly; only while Alban dwelt on "the Measure," in which, when it was yet too unripe for practical statesmen, he had attached his faith as a thinker, the orator's eye flashed with young fire. A great truth is eternally clear to a great heart that has once nourished its germ and foreseen its fruits. But when Alban quitted that part of his theme, all the rest seemed wearisome to his listener. They had now wound their walk to the opposite side of the lake, and paused near the thick beech-trees, hallowed and saddened by such secret associations to the mournful owner.

"No, my dear Alban," said Darrell, "I cannot summon

up sufficient youth and freshness of spirit to re-enter the turbulent arena I have left. Ah! look yonder where Lionel and Sophy move! Give me, I do not say Lionel's years, but Lionel's wealth of hope, and I might still have a wish for fame and a voice for England; but it is a subtle truth, that where a man misses a home, a link between his country and himself is gone. Vulgar ambition may exist—the selfish desire of power; they were never very strong in me, and now less strong than the desire of rest; but that beautiful, genial, glorious union of all the affections of social citizen, which begins at the hearth and widens round the land, is not for the hermit's cell."

Alban was about to give up the argument in irritable despair, when, happening to turn his eye towards the farther depth of the beech-grove, he caught a glimpse—no matter what of; but quickening his step in the direction to which his glance had wandered, he seated himself on the gnarled roots of a tree that seemed the monarch of the wood, widespreading as that under which Tityrus reclined of old; and there, out of sight of the groups on the opposite banks of the lake—there, as if he had sought the gloomiest and most secret spot for what he had yet to say, he let fall, in the most distinct yet languid tones of his thorough-bred, cultured enunciation, "I have a message to you from Lady Montfort. Restless man, do come nearer, and stand still. I am tired to death." Darrell approached, and, leaning against the trunk of the giant tree, said, with folded arms and compressed lips—

"A message from Lady Montfort!"

"Yes. I should have told you, by-the-by, that it was she who, being a woman, of course succeeded where I, being a man, despite incredible pains and trouble, signally failed, discovered Arabella Fossett, *alias* Crane, and obtained from her the documents which free your life for ever from a haunting and torturing fear. I urged her to accompany me hither, and place the documents herself in your hand. She refused; you were not worth so much trouble, my dear Guy. I requested her at least to suffer me to show to you a paper containing Jasper Losely's confession of a conspiracy to poison her mind against you some years ago—a conspiracy so villanously ingenious, that it would have completely exonerated any delicate and proud young girl from the charge of fickleness in yielding

to an impulse of pique and despair. But Lady Montfort did not wish to be exonerated; your good opinion has ceased to be of the slightest value to her. But to come to the point. She bade me tell you that, if you persist in sheltering yourself in a hermit's cell from the fear of meeting her—if she be so dangerous to your peace—you may dismiss such absurd apprehension. She is going abroad, and, between you and me, my dear fellow, I have not a doubt that she will marry again before six months are out. I spoke of your sufferings; she told me she had not the smallest compassion for them."

"Alban Morley, you presumed to talk thus of me?" cried Darrell, livid with rage.

"Strike, but hear me. It is true you would not own, when I was last at Fawley, that she was the cause of your secluded life, of your blighted career; but I knew better. However, let me go on before you strangle me. Lady Montfort's former feelings of friendship for you are evidently quite changed; and she charged me to add, that she really hoped that you would exert your good sense and pride (of which Heaven knows you have plenty) to eradicate an absurd and romantic sentiment, so displeasing to her, and so——"

"It is false! it is false! What have I done to you, Colonel Morley, that you should slander me thus? *I* send you messages of taunt and insult! I—*I!*—you cannot believe it—you cannot!"

Caroline Montfort stood between the two, as if she had dropped from heaven.

A smile, half in triumph, half in irony, curved the lip of the fine gentleman. It faded instantly as his eye turned from the face of the earnest woman to that of the earnest man. Alban Morley involuntarily bowed his head, murmured some words unheard, and passed from the place, unheeded.

Not by concert nor premeditation was Caroline Montfort on that spot; she had consented to accompany her cousin to Fawley, but before reaching the park gates her courage failed her; she would remain within the carriage; the Colonel, wanted in London as soon as possible, whatever the result of his political mission to Darrell, could not stay long at Fawley; she would return with him. Vance's presence and impatient desire to embrace his niece did not

allow the Colonel an occasion for argument and parley. Chafed at this fresh experience of the capricious uncertainty of woman, he had walked on with Vance to the Manor-house. Left alone, Caroline could not endure the stillness and inaction which increased the tumult of her thoughts; she would at least have one more look—it might be the last—at the scenes in which her childhood had sported—her youth known its first happy dreams. But a few yards across those circumscribed demesnes, on through those shadowy serried groves, and she should steal unperceived in view of the house, the beloved lake, perhaps even once more catch a passing glimpse of the owner. She resolved, she glided on; she gained the beech-grove, when, by the abrupt wind of the banks, Darrell and Alban came suddenly on the very spot. The flutter of her robe, as she turned to retreat, caught Alban's eye; the reader comprehends with what wily intent, conceived on the moment, that unscrupulous schemer shaped the words which chained her footstep, and then stung her on to self disclosure. Trembling and blushing, she now stood before the startled man—He startled out of every other sentiment and feeling than that of ineffable, exquisite delight to be once more in her presence; she, after her first passionate outburst, hastening on, in confused broken words, to explain that she was there but by accident—by chance; confusion growing deeper and deeper—how explain the motive that had charmed her steps to the spot.

Suddenly from the opposite bank came the music of the magic flute, and her voice as suddenly stopped and failed her.

"Again—again," said Darrell, dreamily. "The same music! the same air! and this the same place on which we stood together when I first dared to say, 'I love!' Look! we are under the very tree! Look! there is the date I carved on the bark when you were gone, but had left Hope behind. Ah, Caroline, why can I not now resign myself to age? Why is youth, while I speak, rushing back into my heart, into my soul? Why cannot I say, 'Gratefully I accept your tender friendship; let the past be forgotten; through what rests to me of the future while on earth, be to me as a child.' I cannot—I cannot! Go!"

She drew nearer to him, gently, timidly. "Even that, Darrell—even that; something in your life—let me be something still!"

"Ay," he said with melancholy bitterness, "you deceive me no longer now! You own that, when here we stood last, and exchanged our troth, you in the blossom, and I in the prime, of life—you own that it was no woman's love, deaf to all calumny, proof to all craft that could wrong the absent; no woman's love, warm as the heart, undying as the soul, that you pledged me then?"

"Darrell, it was not—though then I thought it was."

"Ay, ay," he continued with a smile, as if of triumph in his own pangs, "so *that* truth is confessed at last! And when, once more free, you wrote to me the letter I returned, rent in fragments, to your hand—or when, forgiving my rude outrage and fierce reproach, you spoke to me so gently yonder, a few weeks since, in these lonely shades, then what were your sentiments, your motives? Were they not those of a long-suppressed and kind remorse?—of a charity akin to that which binds rich to poor, bows happiness to suffering?—some memories of gratitude—nay, perhaps of childlike affection?—all amiable, all generous, all steeped in that sweetness of nature to which I unconsciously rendered justice in the anguish I endured in losing you; but do not tell me that even *then* you were under the influence of woman's love."

"Darrell, I was not."

"You own it, and you suffer me to see you again! Trifler and cruel one, is it but to enjoy the sense of your undiminished, unalterable power?"

"Alas, Darrell! alas! why am I here?—why so yearning, yet so afraid to come? Why did my heart fail when these trees rose in sight against the sky?—why, why—why was it drawn hither by the spell I could not resist? Alas, Darrell, alas! I am a woman *now*—and—and this is——" She lowered her veil, and turned away; her lips could not utter the word, because the word was not pity, not remorse, not remembrance, not even affection; and the woman loved now too well to subject to the hazard of rejection—Love!

"Stay, oh stay!" cried Darrell. "Oh that I could dare to ask you to complete the sentence! I know—I know by the mysterious sympathy of my own soul, that you could never deceive me more! Is it—is it——" His lips falter too; but her hand is clasped in his; her head is reclining upon his breast; the veil is withdrawn from the sweet downcast

face; and softly on her ear steal the murmured words, "Again and now, till the grave—Oh, by this hallowing kiss, again—the Caroline of old!"

Fuller and fuller, spreading, wave after wave, throughout the air, till it seemed interfused and commingled with the breath which the listeners breathe, the flute's mellow gush streams along. The sun slopes in peace towards the west; not a cloud in those skies, clearer seen through yon boughs stripped of leaves, and rendering more vivid the evergreen of the arbute and laurel.

Lionel and Sophy are now seated on yon moss-grown trunk; on either side the old grey-haired man, as if agreeing for a while even to forget each other, that they may make *him* feel how fondly he is remembered. Sophy is resting both her hands on the old man's shoulder, looking into his face, and murmuring in his ear with voice like the coo of a happy dove. Ah! fear not, Sophy; *he* is happy too—*he* who never thinks of himself. Look—the playful smile round his arch lips; look—now he is showing off Sir Isaac to Vance; with austere solemnity the dog goes through his tricks; and Vance, with hand stroking his chin, is moralising on all that might have befallen had he grudged his three pounds to that famous INVESTMENT.

Behind that group, shadowed by the Thorn-tree, stands the PREACHER, thoughtful and grave, foreseeing the grief that must come to the old man with the morrow, when he will learn that a guilty son nears his end, and will hasten to comfort Jasper's last days with pardon. But the Preacher looks not down to the death-couch alone; on and high over death looks the Preacher! By what words Heavenly Mercy may lend to his lips shall he steal a way, yet in time, to the soul of the dying, and justify murmurs of hope to the close of a life so dark with the shades of its past? And to him, to the Preacher, they who survive—the two mourners—will come in their freshness of sorrow! He, the old man? Nay, to him there will be comfort. His spirit Heaven's kindness had tempered to trials; and, alas! for *that* son, what could father hope more than a death free from shame, and a chance yet vouchsafed for repentance? But she, the grim, iron-grey woman? The Preacher's interest, I know, will soon centre on her:—And balm may yet drop on thy wounds, thou poor, grim, iron-grey, loving woman!

Lo! that traitor, the Flute-player, over whom falls the deep grateful shade from the eaves of the roof-tree reprieved, though unconscious as yet of that happy change in the lot of the master, which, ere long, may complete (and haply for sons sprung in truth from the blood of the Darrell) yon skeleton pile, and consummate, for ends nobler far, the plan of a grand life imperfect;—though as yet the musician nor knows nor conjectures the joy that his infamous treason to Sophy so little deserves; yet, as if by those finer perceptions of sense impressed ere they happen, by changes of pleasure and of pain, which Art so mysteriously gives to the minds from which music is born, his airs, of themselves, float in joy: Like a bird at the coming of spring, it is gladness that makes him melodious.

And Alban Morley, seemingly intent upon the sketch which his amiable niece-in-law submits to his critical taste ere she ventures to show it to Vance, is looking from under his brows towards the grove, out from which, towering over all its dark brethren, soars the old trysting beech-tree, and to himself he is saying, "Ten to one that the old House of Vipont now weather the CRISIS; and a thousand to one that I find at last my arm-chair at the hearth of my school-friend, Guy Darrell!"

And the lake is as smooth as glass; and the swans, hearkening the music, rest still, with white breasts against the grass of the margin; and the doe, where she stands, her fore-feet in the water, lifts her head wistfully, with nostrils distended, and wondering soft eyes that are missing the master. Now full on the beech-grove shines the westering sun; out from the gloomy beech-grove into the golden sunlight—they come, they come—Man and the Helpmate, two lives re-betrothed—two souls re-united. Be it evermore! Amen.

THE END.

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